

## Appendix 'L'

### **GUIDANCE NOTES ON THE STRUCTURE AND RULES FOR THE PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC AT AREA FORUM MEETINGS**

#### Introduction

1. The Council has 9 Area Forums, which are based on groupings of 2 or 3 of its wards.
2. The current ward groupings that make up the Area Forum are:  
  
Central, Kingstone and Old Town  
Cudworth and North East  
Darfield and Wombwell  
Darton East, Darton West and Dodworth  
Dearne North and Dearne South  
Hoyland Milton and Rockingham  
Monk Bretton and St Helen's  
Penistone East and West  
Stairfoot and Worsbrough
3. Area Forums meet 12 times per year, at intervals of approximately 4 weeks.
4. They meet in public (with provision for private sessions - with explanation - where necessary) and are held in local areas rotating between wards where local venues are available.
5. Area Forums are always chaired by a Council Member. The Chair of each meeting will be a Councillor for the Ward in which the meeting is taking place. In the event of no Councillor for the Ward hosting the Forum being present a Chairman from the remainder of the Forum's Elected Members will be appointed except in a 2-Ward Forum when the meeting will be unable to proceed.
6. Area Forums can nominate to Council persons from local organisations within the Forum's area to act as non-voting co-opted members of the Forum. The approval of any such nominations lies with the Council.

#### Role of Area Forums

7. The main aims and roles of Area Forums are to:-
  - (a) encourage access and participation by local residents in the democratic process;

- (b) contribute to the development of area community plans;
- (c) scrutinise the impact and co-ordination of the Authority's policies and services and those of other organisations - in local areas;
- (d) seek attendance by cabinet members and senior officers to answer questions as necessary;
- (e) consider issues of local concern and to produce reports to Cabinet on these;
- (f) indicate views on issues referred by Cabinet for comment;
- (g) indicate views on a range of issues to be raised at Area Forum by appropriate Officers which require local Member consultation;
- (h) contribute to Best Value reviews as a formal consultee;
- (i) identify issues and services on which an annual performance report will be sought by the Area Forum;
- (j) recommend to Cabinet proposals for expenditure from the Community Support Fund in support of the community planning process;
- (h) receive reports back on the work of the Area Boards.

#### Public Question and Answer Sessions

8. Area Forums provide the opportunity for residents to raise questions on their own issues of local community concern with each agenda for an Area Forum containing an item "Public Question and Answer Session". The term "resident" will also apply to those with strong family ties to the area or bona fide representatives of groups and associations who may or may not be based in the area but through their bodies' aims may have an interest in an item of local concern.
9. Those who are not a local resident of the Forum Area, who do not have strong family ties, or a bona fide representative of a group or body who through their aims may have an interest in a local interest on items of local concern will not be allowed to ask questions at the meeting.
10. The Chairman will determine if any question is appropriate for submission to the Forum or whether any member of the public does not qualify to ask a question during the public question and answer session.
11. If questions relating to individual cases under the Authority's regulatory functions - planning, licensing etc. are asked, it is possible that discussions on such cases may adversely affect the appropriateness of members of a Forum

sitting on the Regulatory Board when any case is considered. Members may, therefore, decline to deal with such questions.

12. Any written questions submitted shall be read aloud by either the resident or the Borough Secretary's representative and responded to by members of the Area Forum, appropriate Cabinet Member if present and/or appropriate Officers.
13. The question and answer session item at Area Forum meetings shall not exceed 30 minutes in duration. Any questions not dealt with shall stand deferred to the next meeting or, if the questioner so wishes, shall be responded to in writing.