

Your Moray

AREA FORUM HANDBOOK



For alternative formats, languages or further information, please ask an English speaking friend or relative to:

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Email: equalopportunities@moray.gov.uk
Write to: Project Officer
Chief Executive's Office
High Street
Elgin
IV30 1BX

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LOCAL AREA FORUM HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The Moray Council Community Support Unit has produced this handbook to help support members of the community to become involved in Moray Community Planning Partnership's Area Forums.

The handbook is designed for

- All members of the community who are interested in becoming involved in Area Forums
- Members of the community already involved in Area Forums
- Any other group or organisation with an interest in the community's role in Community Planning

The purpose of the handbook is

- To let you know more about Area Forums
- To let you know why community involvement in Community Planning is important
- To help you understand the role of Area Forums in Community Planning
- To let you know what support is available to help you to become involved
- To let you know who and what Moray Community Planning Partnership is and what it aims to achieve

The Language

We have tried to use simple straightforward language; however it is sometimes impossible to completely avoid jargon. We have included a section at the end of the handbook that explains some of the current buzz words.

This handbook can be made available in large print, Braille, audio tapes and other languages if required. Should you require another format please contact your local Community Support Unit Staff (*contact details on page 13*).

Why do we have Area Forums?

Area Forums are where local members of the community can become involved in the Community Planning process in Moray.

Community Planning is a key Scottish Government initiative, aimed at improving public services and the lives of people who use them. This is achieved by the local authority and other local agencies including community, voluntary, public and private sector organisations coming together to develop and implement a shared vision for promoting the wellbeing of the area.

The Local Government Scotland Act (2003) placed a statutory duty on local authorities and key partners to engage effectively in Community Planning and be held accountable for that engagement.

The **two main aims** of Community Planning can be described as:

- Making sure people and communities are alerted to or engaged in decisions which affect them, linked to
- Helping organisations to work together in providing better public services.

At a local level the Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP) recognises Area Forums as an important means of engaging with local people in the Community Planning process.

The **key objectives** of local Community Planning are to:

- Empower local communities and make policy more understandable to those involved.
- Improve the connection and communication between national priorities and those at regional, local and neighbourhood levels.
- Develop local Area Action Plans.
- Deliver quality and innovation by ensuring public and voluntary agencies work together to deliver more easily accessible services.
- Strengthen local accountability and enhance the role of Elected Members.

Community Planning is about the planning and delivery of services within local communities. It is therefore essential that members of the community are at the heart of it. People living in the local communities are best placed to inform service providers about the issues affecting them in their daily lives.

The more people who get involved and work together, the stronger the communities voice is in influencing those who deliver services and the more impact the community have in making a difference to service delivery.

ABOUT AREA FORUMS

What is an Area Forum?

An Area Forum is a constituted group which provides a platform for local people and community organisations to come together to influence the planning and delivery of services in their area and across Moray.

What does an Area Forum do?

- Finds out the concerns of local people (individuals and community organisations) and listen to their views on the issues that affect them.
- Brings together local people and community organisations so that they can work in partnership.
- Identifies local priorities and works with others to produce an Area Action Plan.
- Supports existing community groups (or newly formed action groups) to take responsibility for addressing particular actions within the Area Action Plan.
- Lets people know about the Area Forum and the Area Action Plan.
- Responds to consultations from Community Planning Partners.
- Works with the other Community Planning Partners to achieve the long term goals set out in the Single Outcome Agreement which can be viewed at www.yourmoray.org.uk/DocumentLibrary/PartnershipDocuments.htm

Where are they?

The Area Forum areas are based around the secondary school catchment areas. The areas covered are:

- Buckie
- Elgin North
- Elgin South
- Forres
- Milnes
- Speyside

Forums are not currently established in Keith and the Laich..

The names of the Area Forums can only be altered with the approval of MCPP.

Who can get involved?

Residents living within each Area Forum catchment area are welcome to become members of their Area Forum and attend Area Forum meetings to ensure their own views, as well as the views of neighbours and friends, are represented on issues raised within the remit of the Area Forum.

Membership of each Area Forum is also open to all community groups and voluntary organisations active in the local area. Each group or organisation is invited to send one (or more) representatives to attend Area Forum meetings. Community group representatives would be expected to develop two-way communication between the Area Forum and the organisation or group they represent.

Each Area Forum should develop a close working relationship between itself and Community Councils in its area. There is a clear and mutual benefit from such a relationship for both organisations in that the Area Forums will complement and enhance the role of the Community Councils. For more information on Community Councils visit www.yourmoray.org.uk

Membership of any Area Forum is conditional on completion of a membership form. Only members of the Area Forum are entitled to vote on matters raised at Area Forum meetings. From the membership the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are appointed annually at the Annual General Meeting.

Any member of an Area Forum will be removed from mailing lists if they have not attended meetings or taken part in the work of the Area Forum for six successive main meetings. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may override this clause.

Elected members from the relevant wards are welcome to attend Area Forum meetings and encourage participation from their wards.

Each Area Forum will seek to ensure that its membership reflects the diversity of the local community, which it represents, and that all sections of the community, including groups such as migrant workers and ethnic minorities, have their views represented.

Relevant members from Community Planning partners will be expected to attend Area Forum meetings, when invited, to inform discussion around specific agenda items.

How often do they meet?

The Area Forum will meet a minimum of four times a year. They may meet more often, as required. Such a decision should be agreed in advance by the Area Forum membership. All meetings of the Area Forum will be publicised in advance in the local media and on the Community Planning website.

The main work of progressing issues within the Area Action Plan will be carried out between meetings. This will involve a range of organisations identified to take responsibility for moving forward particular actions. These

may be existing community organisations, individual residents or new groups established for the purpose of addressing a particular issue.

How are decisions taken at meetings?

Every effort should be made to reach agreement on decisions taken at meetings to avoid the need for voting. Where agreement cannot be reached, issues will be decided by a vote being taken. Each organisation and individual member will be entitled to one vote.

Agenda items and associated papers will be prepared in advance, agreed by the Chair, and circulated by the Secretary at least one week before meetings. All agenda items must be received by the Chair at least one week before the agenda is sent out.

What is the status of Area Forums?

Area Forums are recognised by the MCPP as an important means of engaging local people in the Community Planning process. A model constitution has been produced for all Area Forums in order to establish consistency. There is scope for local flexibility, whereby each Area Forum can add particular clauses to its constitution to reflect local circumstances or concerns. Thereafter, each constitution must be approved by the MCPP to ensure that it meets its aims.

How are local priorities and needs addressed?

Each Area Forum works with staff from partner agencies and local Youth fora on the creation of an Area Action Plan to a format specified by the MCPP. The Plan sets out the actions agreed by Area Forum members and endorsed by the MCPP to address identified needs in their area.

The process of identifying needs involves local consultation, as well as information provided by the MCPP partners and Theme Groups, to ensure that a full picture of needs is created.

The Area Action Plan is put together following dialogue and negotiation with MCPP representatives and should link directly to the strategic priorities under the Community Planning themes. Once finalised, the Area Action Plan should be circulated to members of MCPP for approval.

Local groups should be identified as having lead responsibility to progress actions within the Area Action Plan. Where no relevant groups exist, new action groups should be created. Targets and timescales should also be identified to ensure that the progress of the Plan can be monitored and reviewed. The progress on Plans should be reviewed regularly by the Area Forums and appropriate changes and additions made. Each Plan is therefore an evolving document, subject to changing local needs and priorities.

How are Area Forums supported?

It is important to remove any barriers which may prevent local people from getting involved and participating effectively. Out of pocket expenses will be met for transport, travel, childcare and carers costs. Crèche facilities and interpreters can be provided if necessary. Area Forum meetings are held in venues which allow disabled access.

Practical support such as meeting space, etc can be accessed via the Community Support Unit staff that facilitate and promote the smooth operation of Area Forums. They work closely with Area Forum members to ensure a supportive structure which responds to the needs of Area Forum members in addressing issues.

The National Standards for Community Engagement* set out 10 statements of commitment that can be used to develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services.

Learning, Evaluation and Planning (LEAP)* is a tool which supports us to plan more effectively, identify and evidence changes that we hope to make, learn from our experiences and work in partnership with one another.

Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOICE)* has been designed to assist individuals and organisations to design and deliver effective community engagement. It is a tool that supports us to plan community engagement and service user participation, conduct it effectively, monitor and record the process and evaluate the outcomes.

Opportunities for Area Forum members to attend local and national conferences related to Community Planning will be provided.

In addition to this handbook Community Support Unit staff has developed other handbooks to support Area Forums, as well as other community groups and organisations, on the subjects of Marketing, Increasing Your Membership and Funding.

Is there any funding to assist Area Forums?

A small amount of funding is provided by the Moray Council to each Area Forum. This is intended to cover administrative expenses only, including the cost of secretarial assistance, meeting venues, and stationery and promotional media, such as posters, news sheets etc. It also covers relevant expenses incurred by Forum members, including childcare costs, travel to meetings and email, telephone and postage costs. This funding is made available to each Forum at the start of the financial year and transferred into their bank accounts.

Requests for possible funding for projects identified within the Area Action Plans, and/or identified by Theme Groups, will be channelled through Community Support Unit staff.

Area Forums also have the opportunity to draw down funding from external sources. However, this should only be done where there are no existing local groups, either individually or collectively, in a position to do this. Community Support Unit staff have a role in supporting Forums to identify and make application to sources of funding.

There may be occasions where Area Forums can access amounts of funding through particular funding streams. In this case, the funding will be allocated through liaison with the funding provider and invoices submitted directly to them.

How everyone is kept informed about the Area Forums?

Each Area Forum should take steps to ensure that everyone in their area is kept up to date on the work of the Area Forum and the Area Action Plan.

Each Area Forum is encouraged to develop its own local publicity strategy to raise awareness and pass on information within its own area. Use should also be made of existing community newsletters, websites and social networks for this purpose.

Area Forums should submit regular updated information to the Community Planning website – www.yourmoray.org.uk Each Area Forum has its own home page on the site containing information about the area, membership of the Forum, minutes of meetings and all the latest news about Forum activity.

Each Area Forum should also produce news stories, which celebrate the achievements of the Area Forum, to be featured in the local press and media. Each Forum should also seek to develop a good relationship with the local press and media and seek coverage of events and initiatives which it is promoting. All contact with the local press and media should take account of the Partnership's agreed Media Protocol available on www.yourmoray.org.uk

MORAY COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

What is the Partnership?

The Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP) was formed in 1999 and is the body responsible for Community Planning in Moray. It is a partnership involving Moray Council, local public sector agencies, the voluntary and private sectors and the community.

Who are the Partners?

The Partners within MCP are:-

The Moray Council

NHS Grampian

Grampian Fire and Rescue Service

Grampian Police

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Moray College

Moray Voluntary Services Organisation

Single Outcome Agreement and Themes

The initial task of the MCP was to compile the first Moray Community Plan*, which was launched in 2001. The Moray Community Plan sets out the strategic priorities to be addressed by the Partnership. Since then, a number of Community Plans have been produced in line with the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)*. The Single Outcome Agreement is an agreement between Moray Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government where the Partnership outlines how it proposes to meet the key priorities and actions to be addressed under each of the themes within the Community Plan.

There are five themes, which are in line with Scottish Government priorities and relate to a number of national outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement:-

- Greener – to improve our natural and built up environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it
- Healthier – to help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care
- Safer & Stronger – to help communities to flourish, becoming a stronger, safer place to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life
- Smarter – to expand opportunities for people to succeed from nurture through to life long learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements
- Wealthier & Fairer – to enable business and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth

(To access information including key priorities and outcomes, key policy documents, statistical information, minutes of meetings, events etc visit www.yourmoray.org.uk)

Moray Community Planning Partnership Structures

The **Area Forums** represent a central focus for local people to engage in the Community Planning process. They bring together local residents and representatives of community organisations to address priority issues identified through local consultation. They are based around the eight secondary school catchment areas.

The **Moray Forum** brings together representatives from each of the 8 Area Forums and is represented on the Community Engagement Working Group. Its members come together with a view to furthering the interests of Area Forums and dealing with common issues and concerns.

Priorities and actions under each theme in the Community Plan are addressed by the five **Theme Groups**, which operate at three levels – Strategic, Coordinating and Operational. The theme groups bring together Elected Members and officers from the key agencies and organisations whose work relates to each theme.

The **Community Planning Board** comprises 7 Elected Members and representatives of partner organisations at a senior level. The Board provides effective leadership to the Partnership facilitates agreement on the strategic priorities of the area and scrutinises the performance of the Partnership.

Community Planning Contacts

_____Area Forum

Email:

Insert Name _____, Community Support Officer

Insert contact details

Tel: _____ email: _____@moray.gov.uk

Ian Todd, Community Support Unit Manager

Elgin Business Centre, Maisondieu Road, Elgin IV30

Tel: 01343 554313

email: ian.todd@moray.gov.uk

John Ferguson, Community Planning and Development Manager

Council Offices, High Street, Elgin, IV30

Tel: 01343 563404

email: john.ferguson@moray.gov.uk

JARGON BUSTER

Terminology

We have all been in situations where we feel as though other people are speaking a different language from us. The use of plain English makes sure everyone understands what is being discussed, never the less, you can't avoid some jargon. The following are explanations of some of the jargon, abbreviations and current buzz words.

Partnerships Partnerships are formal or informal arrangements to work together.

Aims & Objectives Aims are a written description of what a group or organisation is trying to achieve, and the objectives are the methods by which they may do that.

Process Something which takes place over time, through a series of actions rather than the result of one single event.

Monitoring Monitoring is a process of keeping track of or measuring work against deadlines or targets.

Evaluation This is a process of seeing how successful work has been and should be done on a regular basis.

Outcomes The results of planned actions

Abbreviations

MCPP Moray Community Planning Partnership

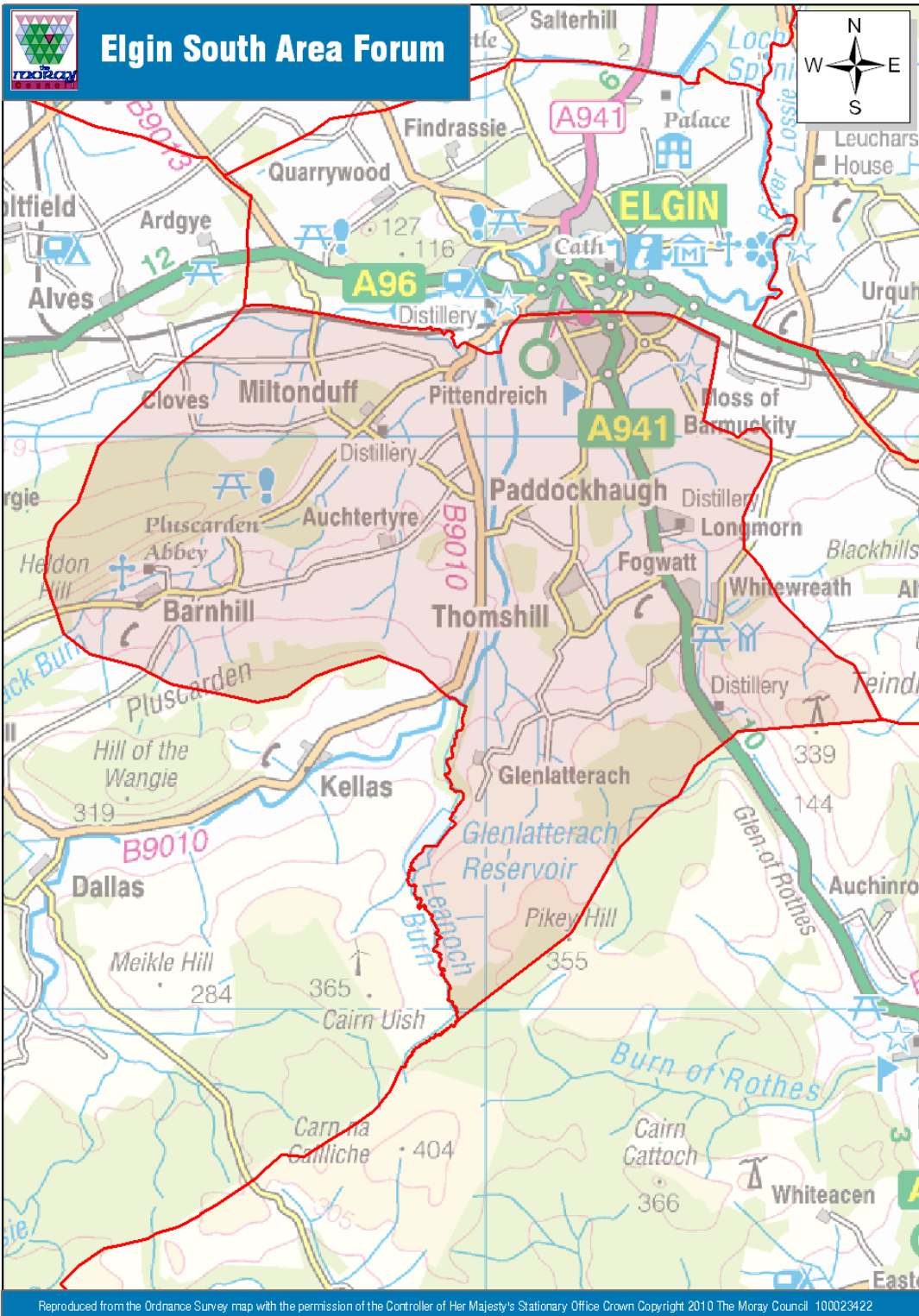
SOA Single Outcome Agreement

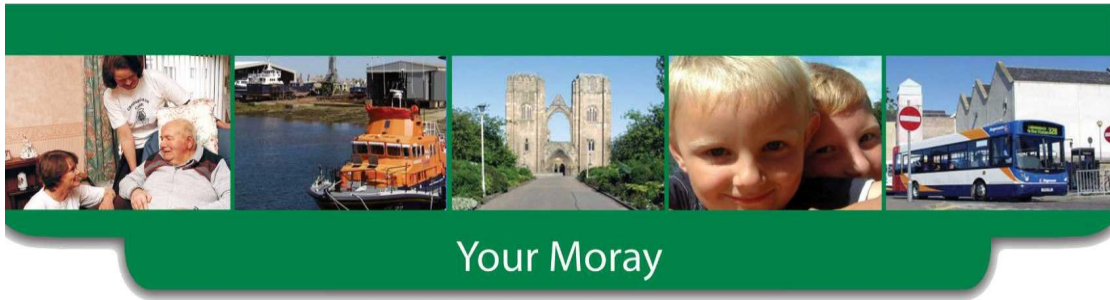
VOICE Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement

LEAP Learning Evaluation and Planning

References

- Moray Community Plan 2006-2010 - Moray Community Planning Partnership (2006)
- Single Outcome Agreement 2009/2010– Moray Community Planning Partnership (2009)
- Nationals Standards for Community Engagement – Scottish Government (2005)
- Learning Evaluation and Planning (LEAP) – Scottish Government (2007)
- Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOICE) – Scottish Community Development Centre (2010)





Your Moray

MODEL AREA FORUM CONSTITUTION



1. Name

1.1 The name of the organisation shall be the _____ Area Forum.

2. Area

2.1 The area covered by the Forum shall take in the catchment of _____ High School and include the communities of a, b, c, d, e, and surrounding settlements.

3. Purpose

3.1 The _____ Area Forum shall provide a platform for local people and community organisations to come together to influence the planning and delivery of services in their area and across Moray.

4. Objectives

4.1 The objectives of the _____ Area Forum shall be:

- (i) to identify and support the implementation of the strategic issues to be addressed by the Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP) and included within the Moray Community Plan
- (ii) to engage with all sectors of the community across the area to establish the key issues and concerns of local people
- (iii) to bring together the main community organisations and local residents in the locality to work in partnership.
- (iv) to identify local priorities and contribute to the production of an _____ Area Action Plan.
- (v) to invite existing community groups or newly-formed action groups to take responsibility for addressing particular actions within the _____ Area Action Plan.
- (vi) to ensure local people are informed about the development of the _____ Area Forum and progress with the _____ Area Action Plan
- (vii) to provide a means and reference point for consultation by Community Planning partners

5. Membership

5.1 Membership of the _____ Area Forum shall be conditional on satisfactory completion and receipt of a membership form. Only members of the Forum shall be entitled to vote on matters raised at Forum meetings.

5.2 All residents living within the _____ Area Forum catchment shall be eligible to become members of the Forum and attend Forum meetings to ensure their own views, as well as the views of neighbours or friends, are represented on issues raised within the remit of the Forum.

5.3 Membership of the _____ Area Forum shall also be open to all community groups and voluntary organisations active in the area. Each group or organisation may send one (or more) representatives to attend Forum meetings.

- 5.4 The Forum shall seek to ensure that its membership reflects the diversity of the local community, which it represents, and that all sections of the community have their views represented.
- 5.5 Any member of the _____ Area Forum shall be removed from mailing lists if they have not attended meetings without apologies or taken part in the work of the Forum for six successive main meetings. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may override this clause.

6. Office Bearers

- 6.1 The _____ Area Forum shall elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and a Secretary from its membership.
- 6.2 The Forum may elect other office-bearers from its membership, if it so wishes.
- 6.3 All office-bearers shall be re-elected annually at the Annual General Meeting of the Forum. Office-bearers shall be entitled to hold the same office for a maximum period of three years, unless no other Forum members are prepared to stand in their place. Office-bearers shall be entitled to seek election to any another office after that time for the same maximum period.

7. Meetings

- 7.1 The _____ Area Forum shall meet a minimum of four times per year. It may meet more often, as required. Any such decision shall be agreed in advance by the Forum membership.
- 7.2 All meetings of the Forum shall be held in local, accessible venues.
- 7.3 Each meeting of the Forum shall decide the date and place of the next meeting.
- 7.4 All meetings of the Forum shall be publicised in advance through the local media and on the Community Planning website.
- 7.5 Action Groups shall meet, as and when required, between the main meetings of the Forum and shall report back to the Forum at each meeting.

8. Quorum

- 8.1 The quorum of a meeting of the _____ Area Forum, and any Action Groups set up under it, shall consist of 30% of the membership, as defined in 5.1.

9. Annual General Meeting

- 9.1 An Annual General Meeting of the membership of _____ Area Forum shall be held each year at a time determined by the Forum.
- 9.2 The purpose of the Meeting shall be to

- (i) consider and adopt an Annual Report of Forum activity and achievements over the previous year.
- (ii) consider any other business submitted in writing not less than fourteen days before the meeting and printed on the agenda.
- (iii) elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary and other office-bearers, as deemed necessary.

10. Area Action Plan

- 10.1 The _____ Area Forum shall contribute to the production of an _____ Area Action Plan.
- 10.2 The Plan shall set out actions agreed by Forum members and the MCPP to address identified needs in their area over a specified period of time.
- 10.3 The process of identifying needs shall involve consultation with local people in the Forum area, as well as information provided by the MCPP partners and Theme Groups, to ensure that a full picture of needs is created.
- 10.4 The Plan shall be finalised following dialogue and negotiation with MCPP partner representatives and link directly to the strategic priorities under the themes of Community Planning.
- 10.5 Local groups shall be identified as having lead responsibility to progress actions within the Plan. Where no relevant local groups exist, new action groups shall be created. Clearly defined targets and timescales shall also be identified to ensure that the progress of the Plan can be monitored and reviewed.
- 10.6 The progress on the Plan shall be reviewed at each Forum meeting and appropriate changes and additions made.

11. Finance

- 11.1 A small amount of funding shall be provided by the MCPP to the _____ Area Forum. This is intended to cover administrative expenses only. This funding shall be transferred into the bank account of the Forum at the start of the financial year, which shall run from 1st April until 31st March.
- 11.2 An agreed number of signatories (normally four) shall be appointed to sign cheques. Two signatories must sign each cheque.
- 11.3 Possible funding for projects identified within the _____ Area Action Plan shall be directed through the local Community Support staff. Community Support staff shall assist the Forum in facilitating links between the appropriate partners to ensure that criteria agreed by the Partnership is strictly adhered to.

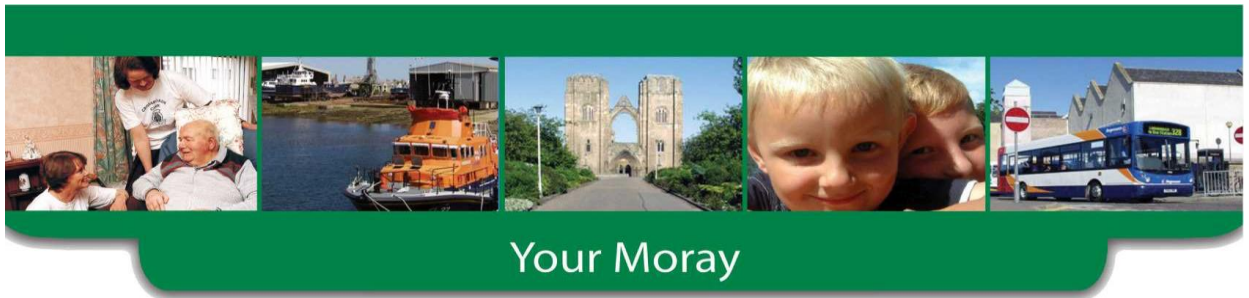
- 11.4 The Forum shall draw down funding from external sources only where there are no existing local groups, either individually or collectively, in a position to do this.
- 11.5 There may be occasions when the Forum can access amounts of funding through particular funding streams. Where this is the case, the funding shall be allocated through liaison with the funding provider and invoices submitted directly to them.
- 11.6 The Forum shall keep proper account of its finances and all monies raised shall be applied to further the purposes of the Forum and for no other purpose. The accounts shall be audited as soon as possible after the end of the financial year. The MCPP shall appoint an auditor for this purpose.

12. Dissolution

- 12.1 The dissolution of the _____ Area Forum must be approved by the MCPP.

13. Changes to Constitution

- 13.1 An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) must be called to consider any proposal to alter this Constitution.
- 13.2 Any proposal to alter the Constitution must be delivered in writing to the Secretary of the _____ Area Forum not less than twenty-eight days before the date of the EGM, at which it is to be considered.
- 13.3 Any alteration shall require the approval of a two-thirds majority of members of the Area Forum present at the meeting..



Your Moray

AREA FORUM MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Please complete the form below to enable you to become a registered member of the _____ Area Forum and return it to the Area Forum Secretary or your Community Support Officer/Worker

YOUR DETAILS (PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)		
1	Name	
2	Address	
3	Post Code	
4	Telephone	
5	Email Address	
OTHER INFORMATION		
6	Do you wish to join the Area Forum as an individual or as the representative of a community group /organisation? <i>(please circle)</i>	Individual Group Representative Name of Group _____
7	Are you happy to receive occasional information from the Area Forum about its activities? <i>(please circle)</i>	YES/NO
8	If yes, how would you like to receive this information? <i>(please circle)</i>	By email By post
9	Would you appreciate any assistance to make it easier for you to attend Area Forum meetings? <i>(please circle as many as wish)</i>	Childcare Dependant Care Transport
10	Are you currently a member of any community groups /organisations? <i>(please circle)</i>	YES/NO If yes, please list them below
11a.	Would you like the opportunity to attend free information and awareness sessions relating to the Area Forum? <i>(please circle)?</i>	YES/NO
11b.	Please detail anything you feel you can bring to the Area Forum	Detail:
12	What do you want to achieve as an Area Forum Member? (Please use overleaf if required)	