

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 July 2024
Report of: Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report: Redesignation of the Neighbourhood Forums for Wolvercote and Summertown & St. Margaret's

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To consider redesignation of the Neighbourhood Forums for Wolvercote and Summertown and St. Margaret's
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Approve the redesignation of Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum in respect of the originally designated neighbourhood area to which it related; and
2.	Approve the redesignation of Summertown and St. Margaret's Forum in respect of the originally designated neighbourhood area to which it related.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Maps of the designated neighbourhood areas that the forum re-designation relate to
Appendix 2	Application received for the redesignation of the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum
Appendix 3	Application received for the redesignation of the Summertown and St. Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum
Appendix 4	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to enable communities to get directly involved in planning for their areas. Neighbourhood Planning allows interested communities to come together through a Neighbourhood Forum to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. Once a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted or 'made' it will become part of the statutory development plan, and therefore an important consideration when making decisions on planning applications. Neighbourhood Forums however only last for five years and at the end of the period need to be formally redesignated.
2. The Neighbourhood Areas for Summertown and St. Margaret's together with Wolvercote were approved by City Executive Board (CEB) on 10th July 2013. The designation of the two separate neighbourhood forums for Summertown and St. Margaret's and for Wolvercote were then subsequently approved by CEB on 22nd January 2014. Section 61F(8) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) provides that a designation of a neighbourhood forum ceases to have effect five years after the date it was designated, therefore in March 2019, the City Executive Board approved the redesignation of the Forums and Neighbourhood Areas for both Summertown and St. Margaret's and Wolvercote. Five years on from this date was 13th March 2024 for both Forums and therefore redesignations are required again.
3. Cabinet is asked to consider the redesignation of these two Neighbourhood Forums which have been in existence for the last decade and both have adopted their own Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Forum applications must link to a designated neighbourhood area. The neighbourhood area and forum applications relate to Summertown and St. Margaret's (following old ward boundaries) and Wolvercote (old ward boundaries). These are identical to those originally designated and shown in Appendix 1.
4. Planning regulations set out the requirements for the designation of a neighbourhood forum and their redesignation is required to go through the same process. The neighbourhood forum applications received (see Appendix 2) should be judged against these criteria. The proposed neighbourhood forums have been subject to public consultation on the City Council's website. The consultation was advertised via a press release and both Neighbourhood Forum groups were notified along with other relevant stakeholders.

Compliance with planning regulations

5. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 specify the criteria that must be met and included in neighbourhood forum applications –
 - the name of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
 - a copy of the written constitution of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
 - the name of the neighbourhood area to which the application relates and a map which identifies the area;
 - the contact details of at least one member of the proposed neighbourhood forum to be made public under regulations 9 and 10; and
 - a statement which explains how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the conditions contained in section 61F(5) of the 1990 Act.

6. The Neighbourhood Planning regulations as mentioned above also state that a local planning authority may designate an organisation or body as a neighbourhood forum if the authority are satisfied that it meets the following conditions:
- It is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned (whether or not it is also established for the express purpose of promoting the carrying on of trades, professions or other businesses in such as area).
 - Its membership is open to:
 - individuals who live in the neighbourhood area concerned;
 - individuals who work there (whether for businesses carried on there or otherwise); and
 - individuals who are elected members of the County council or the City Council whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned.
 - Its membership includes a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom:
 - lives in the neighbourhood area concerned;
 - works there (whether for a business carried on there or otherwise); or
 - is an elected member of the county council, and / or the City Council any of whose area falls within the neighbourhood area concerned
 - it has a written constitution.
7. The applications received are attached in Appendices 2 and 3. Maps are provided that show the designated neighbourhood areas the forum applications relate to (Appendix 1). Information is provided for each application and within the existing constitution for the respective neighbourhood forums to show that the conditions outlined above are met. Each is established for the purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area; has an open membership; includes more than 21 members (ward councillors having all been involved) and has a written constitution that endorses all these requirements.

Consultation details

8. The City Council has a statutory requirement in the 2012 Regulations to publicise for 6 weeks any qualifying applications received to redesignate a neighbourhood forum. The public consultation period took place between Monday 22nd April and Monday 3rd June 2024. The requirement is to advertise the applications to those that live, work, or run a business in the area.
9. The receipt of the forum applications was published with the intention of raising awareness within and around the relevant areas. The comments were published on the City Council's website and sent to the respective neighbourhood forums. In addition, the City Council's social media team published a press release and relevant local groups were also notified.
10. In total, there were 73 responses to the Wolvercote Neighbourhood forum redesignation.

- 69 of the comments were in support of the designation with small minority of these made no specific comment.
- Other submissions commented on the name forum referring to the change in ward area. One comment suggested that the group could work on the way that improvements to the area are proposed from the receipt of Community Infrastructure Levy.

11. The City Council also received 15 responses with regard to Summertown & St. Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum redesignation.

- 10 of the comments were in support of the redesignation.
- Other comments included within this number suggested that the designation should be given more 'teeth' and three other comments suggested that the group must listen to, and respond supportively to, concerns of all residents throughout the area it serves.

12. The responses have been considered alongside the other matters in this report and the comments will be shared with the relevant Neighbourhood Forums. None of comments received change the fact the forum meets the statutory legislation and the criteria required.

Financial implications

13. The City Council is obliged to offer a certain degree of help to groups as they produce their plans. As well as this, the City Council must consult on draft plans, organise an examination and run the Referendum. Given that both plans were adopted a number of years ago the Planning Policy team has already met these requirements. It is possible that in time the forums will wish to review their plans and costs could be incurred as such. However, grants from central government to district councils for each neighbourhood plan provide support for this.

14. The adoption of both neighbourhood plans has meant that the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts generated within the forum area and spent locally increases from 15 to 25%.

Legal issues

15. Officers consider that the information provided by the neighbourhood groups is adequate to show that the statutory requirements for the redesignation of neighbourhood forums are met, and the statutory process for re-designation has been followed.

Level of risk

16. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 4. There are no abnormal risks.

Equalities impact

17. There are no area of concerns for any of the outlined areas listed on the Full Equalities Impact Assessment form. Making this decision will not negatively impact anyone with protected characteristics or human rights issues and legislation.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

18. Once designated, Neighbourhood Forums can produce Neighbourhood Plans which can address specific environmental considerations within their neighbourhood areas in line with the City Council's existing environmental policies and guidelines.

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Background Papers: None

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