

## **BEACON COUNCIL SCHEME: CONSULTATION ON FUTURE THEMES**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines details of a consultation exercise being carried out by the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils. It is seeking suggestions on possible themes for Round 6 (applications would be invited in 2004) and Round 7 (2005) of this Initiative. Comments are sought by 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2003.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Beacon Council Scheme, launched in 1999, was introduced to help recognise excellence in local government and to encourage the spread of best practice.
- 2.2 Each year around 10 themes are selected that are important to local people. The selection of these themes is central the success of the scheme.
- 2.3 Following publication of the Local Government White Paper – ‘Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services’ the Government has announced two changes to the operation of the Beacon Scheme which are relevant to this consultation:
- The move to a longer-term, rolling programme of Beacon themes. This change is to enable authorities to plan ahead and make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the scheme.
  - Opening the scheme to applications from all best value authorities (for example, fire and police authorities and some of the larger parish councils). This change is intended to extend the opportunities for identifying and disseminating good practice.
- 2.4 In the current consultation the Advisory Panel is seeking suggestions for the remaining three themes for Round 6 (seven have been selected already) and for ten themes for Round 7 of the scheme. The themes should focus on issues which directly affect the quality of life for those living and working in local communities, and where the Beacon Council Scheme can create tangible benefits.

### **3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

#### PRINCIPLES BEHIND BEACON THEMES

- 3.1 The Beacon Council Scheme was set up to help all councils achieve a high standard across the full range of services. It aims to raise standards by promoting best practice. To this end, the Scheme focuses on issues of importance for local people; on the services which impact directly on their quality of life. Specific themes should concentrate on:

- Issues which local people consider important;
- Tangible benefits for local people and local communities;
- Services where councils can display innovations of value to other councils;
- Areas where the Beacon Scheme can deliver real improvements.

#### POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN SUGGESTING THEMES

- 3.2 Key points to consider when suggesting themes are:

- Is this topic one where the Council would like to learn from others or have best practice to share?
- Would it be beneficial to repeat a previous theme? Repeating a theme could be helpful if best practice has significantly developed since the theme was first run.
- The diversity of authorities. The scheme is for all best value authorities.
- Could the Beacon Council Scheme reinforce other current or recent initiatives?

- 3.3 The themes chosen in previous Rounds and the seven already chosen for Round 6 are contained in Appendix 1.

### **4 OFFICER COMMENTS**

- 4.1 In the past the Beacon Council Scheme has tended to focus on subjects more readily associated with County Councils, Metropolitan Authorities or Unitary Authorities. Also, the emphasis has been on tackling topics more appropriate in either an urban or a rural context rather than one with a mixture of town and country characteristics such

as this Authority. However, it is clear from the responses made by this Authority and others in the past that the themes now coming forward are more relevant in terms of attracting a bid(s) from this Authority, although there are still the resources required to make such a bid(s) and handle the best practice information dissemination, training and follow-up which would result should such a bid(s) prove successful.

4.2 In terms of additional themes for both Round 6 and Round 7, officers consider that the Council might like to suggest themes around:

- Transforming Leisure Provision
- Licensing and Regulation
- Quality Open Spaces and Woodlands
- Parking Management/Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement
- Improving Planning Performance
- Working in Partnership
- 'Learning' Organisations

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Nothing specific at this stage, other than responding to the consultation exercise.

## **6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Under the new broader Beacon Council Scheme, some of the larger parishes may be eligible to apply for Beacon Award status.

## **COMMENDATION**

7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That subject to any Members' comments, the officer suggestions as to possible future Beacon themes contained in para. 4.2, be endorsed.  
(CE)

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Chief Executive

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**Background Papers:**

None

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## APPENDIX 1

### *Beacon Themes in Round 1*

Dealing with Waste  
Helping Care Leavers  
Helping to Raise Standards by Tackling School Failure  
Improving Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration  
Improving Housing Maintenance  
Preventing Local Shopping and Town Centre Crime and Disorder  
Streamlining Planning Decisions for Business

### *Beacon Themes in Round 2*

Accessible Services  
Competitiveness and Enterprise  
Foster Care  
Independent Living for Older People  
Local Health Strategies  
Maintaining a Quality Environment  
Regenerating through Culture, Sport & Tourism  
Raising Attainment in Education  
Tackling Vehicle Crime  
Tackling Youth Drug Misuse  
Town Centre Regeneration

### ***Beacon Themes in Round 3***

Adoption  
Better Access and Mobility  
Community Legal Services  
Crime Reduction in Rural Areas  
Fostering Business Growth  
Improving Urban Green Spaces  
Libraries as a Community Resource  
Neighbourhood Renewal (In Urban and Rural Areas)  
Promoting Racial Equality  
Tackling Fuel Poverty  
Transition in Education

### ***Beacon Themes in Round 4***

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services  
Community Cohesion  
Quality of the Built Environment  
Removing Barriers to Work  
Rethinking Construction  
Social Inclusion through ICT  
Street and Highway Works  
Supporting the Rural Economy  
Tackling Homelessness  
Transforming Secondary Education

### ***Beacon Themes in Round 5***

Benefits Administration  
Better Local Public Transport  
Crime and Disorder Partnerships  
Early Years  
Housing Renewal  
Services for Older People  
Supporting Older People  
Transforming the School Workforce  
Promoting Sustainable Tourism  
Supporting Social Care Workers

### ***Beacon Themes in Round 6***

Asset Management  
Effective Environmental Health  
Getting Closer to Communities  
Healthy Communities  
Supporting Carers  
Supporting New Business  
Promoting Racial Equality