

DCAP Parish Councils' Forum report to Area Board, 26 November 2012

The Parish Councils' Forum has been hosted by DCAP for a number of years and, after a review of its achievements, it has been proposed that the Partnership withdraws from supporting this service in the strong hope and wish that the councils will themselves continue to network and communicate across their sector.

I was privileged to be invited to lead the original pilot Forum in 2009 following the creation of a Unitary Authority, providing a link between the parishes and the new Area Board, and which emphasised parishes as a tier of local government. Since then more direct working relationships have been established across the Area, helped by personal visits of the Area Board Chair and Manager, parish representation at the Board, and improved understanding of local issues.

DCAP itself has gone through a period of change and reorganisation, launching a new website that will have interactive surveys, and networking through themed interest groups. All of this remains accessible to everyone in the Area, and that includes representatives of the parishes.

Therefore, the time has now come to consider the role that DCAP can play in supporting the Parish Councils' Forum, especially as for a voluntary sector body it becomes less practicable to represent the views of a group of public sector councils consisting of elected councillors.

I would very much welcome the Board's and Parish Council views on the Partnership's proposal to withdraw from hosting the Forum. At the same time I would encourage the parishes themselves to consider the many opportunities to engage with others across the wide range of our subject-specific activities as explained on our website at www.dcap.org.uk. Parishes may particularly wish to consider continuing your own networking arrangements with like-minded councils, maintaining a dialogue on matters of common interest to you.

Cllr Paula Winchcombe

Chair, DCAP Parish Councils' Forum