

Background and Aims of the Federation

1. Background

The concept of joint action by Residents' Associations was started around 2003 by John Green (BENERA) and Michael Chisholm (BAARA). The focus then was on the planning process. Over the next two years, more Residents' Associations became involved, sharing experiences and concerns about the planning process. The City Council and Officers established a "Residents' Associations Forum" to improve dialogue and communication between the Council and Residents' Associations on planning matters and to discuss how the planning service might be continuously improved. In July 2007, the Council inaugurated a "Residents' Associations Forum" that has met at approximately six month intervals since.

Probably inevitably, concerns and issues widened to include broader aspects of local government policy and plans, largely triggered by spin-off from the Growth Agenda. By the middle of 2009, the contact list included 104 RAs and local interest groups.

Following a successful meeting in November 2008, several of FeCRA's constituent RAs started to re-vitalise the Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations (FeCRA) through regular focused meetings and a formal structure. The Federation is complementary to the Council organised Forum since it has a much broader remit and is less circumscribed in its activities. Sub-groups from the Federation have meetings with Councillors and Officers on topics of mutual concern.

2. Aims

The FeCRA has a Constitution that states:

The purpose of the FeCRA will be to act on behalf of residents of Cambridge who are members of affiliated Residents Associations (RAs) in respect of the built environment and the provided public services, particularly in relation to strategic planning of the city and its services, and the policies relating to those plans and services.

3. Development of collective views across the Associations

Areas where FeCRA actions are seen to be beneficial include:

- Information exchange
- Mutual support and assistance
- Access to sources of specialist expertise and competence
- Development and promulgation of strategic views of vital issues for the City of Cambridge
- Collective interaction with the Council to ensure key issues are addressed.

FeCRA can only "speak" authoritatively if there is a genuine consensus across constituent RAs.

This may be the case in only a few situations. However, even if there is no consensus, clarity regarding the range and strengths of support for different views can be a valuable input to Council and RA discussions.

FeCRA warmly invites city residents' associations to join with others in helping to protect and enhance the essential character of Cambridge during a period of rapid and substantial change.

4. Contact

The Chair of the Federation can be contacted by email at chair@fecra.org.uk