

AGENDA

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2020

Time: 5.30pm

Venue: Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Mike Dendor, Angela Harrison, Alan Horton, Denise Knights, Richard Palmer, Roger Truelove (Chairman), Mike Whiting and Corrie Woodford.

Quorum = 3

Pages

1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chairman will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures.

The Chairman will inform the meeting whether there is a planned evacuation drill due to take place, what the alarm sounds like (i.e. ringing bells), where the closest emergency exit route is, and where the second closest emergency exit route is, in the event that the closest exit or route is blocked.

The Chairman will inform the meeting that:

- (a) in the event of the alarm sounding, everybody must leave the building via the nearest safe available exit and gather at the Assembly points at the far side of the Car Park. Nobody must leave the assembly point until everybody can be accounted for and nobody must return to the building until the Chairman has informed them that it is safe to do so; and
- (b) the lifts must not be used in the event of an evacuation.

Any officers present at the meeting will aid with the evacuation.

It is important that the Chairman is informed of any person attending who is disabled or unable to use the stairs, so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 12 February 2020 (Minute Nos. 506 - 510) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the room while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Part A report for recommendation to Council

5. Changes to the Constitution - Area Committees

5 - 10

Report published 16 March 2020.

Issued on Monday, 9 March 2020

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of this Committee, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

General Purposes Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	18 March 2020
Report Title	Amendments to constitution: Area committees
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	David Clifford, Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Sarah Porter, Interim Policy Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To recommend to council that it inserts the wording at Appendix I into the constitution.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out changes to the constitution in order to set up and administer area committees across the borough.

2 Background

- 2.1 One of the objectives of the administration is to diffuse power among members and improve public engagement in decision-making. As a result of this cabinet asked the policy development and review committee set up a working group to consider how area committees could work in Swale.
- 2.2 On 12 February cabinet agreed a recommendation to council establishing four area committees across the borough. These recommendations broadly followed a working group report to the policy development and review committee, as well as considering and incorporating the results of a resident survey on the subject.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Appendix I presents the proposed insertion into the constitution. These comprise additions to section 3.2.1, covering geography, membership and terms of reference, and a short addition to section 4.9 to provide the chair with the discretion to invite comments from members of the public.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 If cabinet's decision to recommend the establishment of area committees is accepted by council, this will require amendments to the constitution along the lines set out in Appendix I. There are therefore no significant alternative options

for GPC, although improvements to the precise wording are of course possible, and council will have the alternative option of not establishing area committees at all.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The proposed amendments have been developed in consultation with the Deputy Leader. There has been no further consultation beyond that undertaken as part of the decision to recommend the establishment of area committees to council, but this was fairly extensive, involving both the public and the policy development and review committee.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Introducing area committees will support objective 4.1 in the emerging corporate plan around diffusing decision-making power more widely among elected members and improving the transparency, responsiveness and public accountability of council decision-making.
Financial, Resource and Property	The resource implications were considered and agreed by cabinet, and a relevant allocation of funding was agreed as part of the 2020/21 budget round.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Any changes to the constitution will need to be agreed by full council.
Crime and Disorder	Area committees will have a broad role in enhancing the quality of life and of council services in their area, which could include initiatives to tackle crime and disorder.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Area committees will have a broad role in enhancing the quality of life and of council services in their area, which could include initiatives to tackle environmental issues.
Health and Wellbeing	Area committees will have a broad role in enhancing the quality of life and of council services in their area, which could include initiatives to improve health and wellbeing.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this time.
Equality and Diversity	Setting up area committees should allow for more public engagement with the council and should improve our understanding and consideration of different protected characteristics which will improve our policy making process. It is not considered that the establishment of the committees requires an equality impact assessment, but initiatives subsequently proposed, funded and driven by those committees may well do so.

Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this time.
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7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: Proposed additions to constitution

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Report and minutes of 12 February cabinet decision to recommend establishment of area committees, available [here](#).

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Appendix I: Proposed Additions to Constitution

UNDER 3.2.1 COMMITTEES

Area Committees

Statement of function

The purpose of area committees is to enhance the quality of life and of council services in the relevant area and to bring greater local insight to bear in council decision-making.

Membership

Membership to include all ward members in the area. Area committee boundaries will align with ward boundaries. Substitute Members are not permitted on area committees. The chair and vice-chair of each committee will be voted for at the first meeting of the municipal year.

Areas

- Eastern (Abbey; Boughton and Courtenay; East Downs; Priory; St Ann's; Teynham and Lynsted; Watling). 12 Members (quorum: four Members).
- Sheppey (Minster Cliffs; Queenborough and Halfway; Sheerness; Sheppey Central; Sheppey East). 14 Members (quorum: five Members).
- Sittingbourne (Chalkwell; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman). 11 Members (quorum: four Members).
- Western (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; The Meads; Woodstock; West Downs). 10 Members (quorum: three Members).

Terms of reference

Within their terms of reference the area committees will:

1. Develop a work programme to enhance core services within the area and take a report to council on an annual basis to provide an update on progress;
2. Agree spending decisions in relation to specific funding allocated to members of the area committee;
3. Provide area intelligence to the cabinet and heads of service, and assist with policy development on relevant matters; and
4. Make recommendations to cabinet on issues in the committee's area and respond to any other specific matter referred to it by cabinet, the council or a senior council officer.

Funding allocation

With regard to point 2 of the terms of reference, each Member will receive an identical amount of specific funding, established in each annual council budget, to be allocated to projects in consultation and agreement with the area committee at large.

Members may make proposals for allocating any part of the amount remaining to them at any meeting of the area committee, and the committee's agreement will be decided by a simple majority of Members present. The pooling of individual Members' amounts is permissible.

Any amount for which an allocation has not been agreed by the area committee by the end of the financial year will be forfeited, and no rollovers will be permitted. Any funding allocation agreed by the committee but unspent by the end of each electoral cycle will also be forfeited.

UNDER PART 4.9 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURE RULES

Area Committees

Towards the start of each area committee meeting there will be a 20-minute session (extensible and reducible if necessary and at the chair's discretion) for members of the public to ask relevant questions and make relevant comments to the committee. Questions will be for the chair to answer, but the chair will have discretion to invite other Members to contribute.

The chair will have discretion to invite comments from members of the public on any items while they are being discussed at meetings of the area committee.