

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](#).