Policy Development and Review Committee	Agenda Item: 5
Meeting Date	20 November 2019
Report Title	Draft report to Cabinet on Constitutional Review - Area Committees
Lead Members	Councillor Alastair Gould, Chairman – Policy Development Review Committee Councillor Ben A Martin, Chairman – Area Committee Working Group
SMT Lead **Head of Service**	David Clifford, Policy, Communications and Customer Services Manager
Lead Officers	Sarah Porter, Interim Policy Manager Bob Pullen, Policy and Performance Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	**Open**
Forward Plan	**Reference number:**
Recommendations	1. That the Policy Development and Review Committee consider and approve this report on area committees for submission to Cabinet

1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1. The Policy Development and Review Committee established a working group to take forward consideration of whether the Council should introduce area committees as part of the constitutional review. This report invites the Committee to consider the findings of the working group and to approve this report and recommendations for submission to Cabinet.

2. Background

2.1. Following the May 2019 elections, a new coalition Cabinet formed and outlined their objectives for the next four year administration. One of these objectives was around a constitutional review – diffusing power among members and improving public engagement in decision-making. One of the areas that has been considered to date includes setting up area committees.

2.2. Cabinet asked the Committee to investigate the reasons Swale might want to introduce area committees, what their purpose would be and what areas they would cover. The Committee resolved to establish a working group, consisting of Committee members and co-optees, to consider these further.

2.3. The working group was comprised of the following members:

Councillor Ben Martin (Chairman);
Councillor Mike Dendor;
Councillor Alastair Gould;
Councillor Ken Ingleton; and
Councillor Julian Saunders.

2.4. The group met three times on 3 September, 8 October and 5 November. This report and the recommendations it contains are the conclusion of the group's work.

3. Proposals

Provisions for area committees

3.1. Legislation governing the establishment of area committees stipulate several requirements as follows. Areas committees:

- must be comprised of all ward members who are elected to wards either partially or fully within the area covered by the committee;
- can only discharge functions delegated to them by the council; and
- do not need to be politically balanced.

3.2. However, councils have considerable discretion beyond these statutory requirements on what area committees can do.

3.3. Area committees can operate in councils which have adopted an executive form of governance (such as Leader and Cabinet) or under the committee system.

Survey results

3.4. The results of a public survey conducted during September and October 2019 are at Appendix I. The survey results cannot be taken to be statistically robust and they were not designed to be a full blown public consultation. Nevertheless, it did provide the group with some useful feedback on how residents feel about the possible introduction of area committees and the responses have shaped the approach the group have taken to arrive at their findings and recommendations.

Should the council introduce area committees?

3.5. Area committees can help to diffuse power more widely among members and improving public engagement in decision making. They can bring an opportunity for local residents to observe and participate in the council's decision-making arrangements.

3.6. The flipside of this is that area committees can be very resource intensive. They require agenda, reports and minutes to be prepared, venues to be hired (assuming they will be held in local communities), the presence of Cabinet Members and senior officers and they would have to be supported in their work, possibly by a secretariat.

3.7. The council has a constrained revenue budget position and is highly dependent upon funding streams whose future is unclear. Any constitutional changes which resulted in higher direct staff costs and/or increased demands on senior management resources would need to be offset by ceasing other activities.

3.8. A detailed cost benefit analysis is beyond the scope of the working group but we would recommend that one is undertaken by Cabinet before deciding whether to push ahead with establishing area committees. Nevertheless, an indication of the types of costs which could be involved are at Appendix II. These are purely an illustration and more detailed work would need to be undertaken to establish the true costs involved.

3.9. The setting of member of allowances is a matter for the Member Remuneration Panel and the working group recommends that Cabinet invite the Panel to consider whether area committee chairmen should be eligible to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance and if so what the level of this should be. For illustrative purposes, this is shown as 10% of the Leader's allowance in keeping with the amounts afforded to the chairman of the Audit and Licensing Committees.

3.10. The working group thought that the primary advantage of establishing area committees, in addition to diffusing power among members and improving public engagement in decision making, was to better contribute to place-shaping and targeting resource allocation with the benefit of local knowledge. It should also raise the profile of the Borough Council among local people in terms of which services it provides and who the local councillors are. It should also demonstrate, particularly in Faversham and on Sheppey, that the Council is not specifically 'Sittingbourne-centric'.

3.11. The working group thought that the effectiveness of the area committees should be reviewed after a year.

Recommendation:

a) The working group recommends to Cabinet that:

- a detailed cost benefit analysis is undertaken before a decision to establish area committees is taken;
- the Member Remuneration Panel is invited to consider the appropriateness of a Special Responsibility Allowance for area committee chairmen;

- provided the costs and resources needed to set up and support area committees is not prohibitive, that area committees are established; and

- that the effectiveness of the area committees be reviewed after a year.

Delegated powers

3.12. The working group took the view that area committees should have identical terms of reference with no variation of delegated powers or functions. That said, it should be for each committee to decide the extent to which they exercise those powers or functions.

3.13. Area committees should have a role in place-shaping as well as having delegated authority to allocate funds to local projects e.g. from the Special Projects Fund and possibly some other Council funding streams e.g. heritage and sports development.

3.14. The committees could also serve as a mechanism for consultations on major developments or to propose improvements for the local area (e.g. local skills provision).

3.15. It was envisaged that committees would grow organically, starting with a relatively simple agenda.

3.16. The committees could provide a useful opportunity for the Borough Council to engage with parish and town councils.

3.17. The delegated powers referred to above are not currently available and the Council's Constitution would need to be amended, through the General Purposes Committee and Council, in order to establish area committees and provide them with the necessary delegations.

Recommendation:

b) The working group recommends to Cabinet that the area committees are allocated the delegations at Appendix II as part of their terms of reference.

Membership

3.18. With the aim of diffusing power among members of the Council, the primary members of the committees would be Swale Borough councillors representing the wards covered by the committees.

3.19. The working group concluded that only Swale Borough councillors should have voting rights. This was in keeping with the provision in the [Local Government Act 1972 (Section 101)] that only Swale Borough members and officers can discharge the Council's functions (subject to the necessary delegations) unless we entered into joint committee arrangements.

3.20. In the survey one of the questions asked was 'Who should be invited to attend?'. The results are fully laid out in Appendix I and they indicated that there was broadly support for parish and town councils as well as local service delivery partners. Respondents also suggested including a variety of local groups and representatives including:

- members of the public;
- local community and voluntary groups;
- resident groups; and
- organisations and groups with specific expertise, the Environment Agency, housing associations and food bank organisers were all suggested.

There was a broad consensus that these experts should be invited on an ad hoc basis for relevant meetings.

3.21. The group suggested that Kent County Council members for the six Swale Divisions should be invited to attend the committees as non-voting members. This would give them similar rights as visiting members of Swale committees – i.e. the right to speak, but not to vote. Local delivery partners (e.g. Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, Optivo, Swale Community and Voluntary Services etc.) would be invited to attend committees where there were specific items of interest to them on the agenda.

Recommendation:

c) The working group recommends to Cabinet that:

- all Swale Borough Council members for the wards covered by an area committee are automatically members of that committee;
- Kent County Council members for Swale Divisions are invited to attend area committees with rights to speak, but not vote; and
- Local delivery partners are invited to attend area committees whenever there is an agenda item of interest to them – they shall not be ordinary members of the committees.

Parish and town councils

3.22. Area committees provide a very good opportunity for the Council to engage with Swale's parish and town councils. Parish and town councils are the most local form of democratically elected representatives in the community and there was currently no mechanism for them to engage collectively with the Council.

3.23. One of the suggested areas to be delegated to area committees is to provide 'area intelligence' to Cabinet and heads of service. Parish and town councils could provide a useful means of contributing towards this intelligence with their local knowledge and expertise.

3.24. The working group thought that parish and town councils could play an important role in area committees. However, as illustrated in Appendix IV, there are far too many parish and town councils for it to be practical to accommodate them all as committee members, but they should be notified of meetings and invited to send a representative and contribute to the discussions.

Recommendation:

d) The working group recommends to Cabinet that:

- Parish and town councils be invited to send a representative to attend and contribute at each area committee meeting.

Role of the public

3.25. A main purpose of introducing area committees is to improve public engagement with decision-making. Therefore, the standard provisions on public participation which apply to e.g. the Planning Committee would not suffice.

3.26. Question five of the survey asked 'What role would the public have?' Responses to this question made a range of suggestions including:

- full voting rights for residents;
- keeping the same restrictions on public speaking as are currently in place;
- giving residents time and opportunity to raise local issues;
- for residents to be more "hands on"; and
- none

3.27. Area committees would be properly constituted committees in their own right with delegated powers to take certain decisions, including on resource allocations. As a result, they would need to publish agendas, reports and minutes and the meetings would be held in public.

3.28. The working group considered that while the business of each meeting would naturally be led by the Borough councillors, there should be ample opportunity for the public attending to contribute to the meetings and have their voices heard. This could be achieved in a number of ways including:

- application of the standard rules for public participation, with additional discretion given to the committee chairmen to extend those rules as they saw fit; and

- the scheduling of a timed 'public forum' session at each meeting with priority to speak given over to those members of the public who have indicated in advance of the meeting that they want to raise an issue or ask a question.

Recommendation:

e) The working group recommends to Cabinet that:

- the standard rules for public participation at Council committees is applied, but with more discretion for committee chairman to extend those rules; and

- a timed 'public forum' session at each area committee meeting is scheduled with associated provisions for public participation.

Number and frequency of meetings

3.29. The public survey invited respondents to indicate whether they preferred the frequency of meetings to be held bi-monthly, quarterly or six-monthly. 52% of the people that answered this question indicated that they would be willing to attend the meeting on a quarterly basis, with 11.79% indicating they would prefer it to be held twice a year and 17.47% preferring six meetings a year. The remaining 22.71% of people indicated an 'other' choice, most of these were from people who had previously indicated they were not happy with the idea of area committees. Some of the responses indicated they would be happy with a less formal approach to arranging meetings.

3.30. The working group thought that the committees should meet four times a year, but that it should be for each chairman/committee to determine the precise programming of meetings during the year. Therefore, the committees could meet on a quarterly basis, or more or less frequently if they so wished. This would support the aim that the committees should be able to determine their own methods of working as far as possible.

Recommendation:

f) The working group recommends to Cabinet that the committees should meet four times per year, but that the frequency of meetings is left to each committee to determine.

Areas covered

3.31. The working group considered how many area committees there should be and what geographical areas they should cover.

3.32. One option would be to establish three committees covering the towns of Faversham and Sittingbourne and the rural areas surrounding them and one for the Isle of Sheppey.

3.33. Another option would be to establish four committees, one for Faversham and the rural areas surrounding it and another for the Isle of Sheppey, and then two separate committees for Sittingbourne, one covering the urban wards and the other the rural wards.

3.34. The public survey asked 'How many committees should there be and which areas should they cover?'. 276 of respondents answered this question and 54.35% of them indicated that they preferred the four committee area approach, with a Sittingbourne rural and urban committee

3.35. An option which the group considered, but discounted, was a single area committee encompassing all of the rural wards in Swale. It was considered that all rural areas had a close affinity with their local town and this was more important in terms of the area committee's terms of reference and purpose rather than the common interests all rural areas shared and the challenges they all faced across Swale. In addition, the rural wards are spread widely throughout the Borough – there are no single concentrations of 'urban' and 'rural' in Swale.

3.36. The working group favoured the three-committee model for the following reasons:

- easily understood by the public;
- less resources needed to administer; and
- encompasses the three most identifiable areas of Swale.

3.37. It was considered that creating four area committees, with two committees covering Sittingbourne urban and Sittingbourne rural, would be artificial. Some parts of some wards (e.g. Woodstock ward, and the parish of Tunstall within it) already covered both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the area committees provided an opportunity to bring together the urban and rural parts of the area and artificially splitting them out would go against the grain of this.

3.38. The question has arisen of whether Teynham and Lynsted ward should be part of the Faversham or Sittingbourne area committee. As part of the analysis done

on the survey results the working group also looked at how respondents who had indicated that they were from this ward area responded to the question. Overall there was a view from Teynham residents that they should be part of a separate rural committee area. However given the consideration of the above it was considered that additional specifically rural area committees would only increase the split between rural and urban and lead to less cohesive decision making.

3.39. The ward is clearly part of the Sittingbourne and Sheppey Parliamentary constituency for electoral purposes and unless there are any overriding reasons why it should be treated otherwise, the Working Group recommend that the ward is included as part of the Sittingbourne area committee.

Recommendation:

g) The working group therefore recommends to Cabinet that three area committees are established covering the following areas:

- Faversham (Abbey; Boughton and Courtenay; East Downs; Priory; St Ann's; and Watling);
- Isle of Sheppey (Minster Cliffs; Queenborough and Halfway; Sheerness; Sheppey Central; and Sheppey East);
- Sittingbourne (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Chalkwell; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; Teynham and Lynsted; The Meads; West Downs; and Woodstock).

h) That Teynham and Lynsted forms part of the Sittingbourne area in keeping with its designation under electoral arrangements.

4. Alternative Options

4.1. It was noted that ward members were already able to collaborate across ward boundaries to pool their member grants and that area committees might have a similar role if they were afforded delegated powers to take decisions on grant funding.

4.2. An alternative to delegating power to area committees around grant funding would be to increase the allowance given to individual members to give out under the member grants scheme.

5. Consultation undertaken or proposed

5.1. The working group has not undertaken any formal consultation process. However, officers have sought public views on the introduction of area

committees through a survey which has been publicised through a council press release, on social media channels and through an article in Inside Swale magazine which is delivered to every household in the Borough. The results of the survey are included in this report.

5.2. The working group has also updated the Policy Development and Review Committee at several stages during its review and discussed preliminary recommendations.

6. Implications

6.1. Implications of introducing area committees will be a matter for Cabinet to consider.

7. Appendices

7.1. The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Results of the public survey
- Appendix II: Suggested terms of reference
- Appendix III: Possible costs of establishing area committees

8. Background Papers

8.1 Constitution Review – area committees report, Policy Development and Review Committee, 17 July 2019.

Appendix I

RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC SURVEY

Area Committees - Survey results November 2019

The Area Committees survey was open between 10 September and 1 November 2019.

During this time 308 responses were received. We had two written responses and the remaining were completed using an online survey tool.

Question 1: Do you think we should have area committees and what difference do you think they could make to you and your area?

This was an open ended question, with a free text box. Responses were grouped into a number of categories depending on what the respondent had written.

299 people responded to this question and 9 people skipped it

Table 1

General tone of response	Responses	
No	21.40%	64
Not sure	2.01%	6
Unclear (about what the person feels)	3.01%	9
Yes	60.87%	182
Yes, if	12.71%	38

There was a clear response in favour of Area Committees, with 60.87% stating a clear 'yes' and a further 12.71% stating more of a 'yes, if' preference. Table 2 shows all of the responses that were tagged under the 'yes, if' category so that these can be considered.

Table 2

In principle the idea of engaging local people in decision making is good. However setting these up for the sake of it or to pay homage to the principle will not work. Needs to be a good enough priority which the public want and which they feel will be worth investing their time. If it is another level of bureaucracy it won't work.
At the moment Sheerness is in a very bad way and I believe that needs to be the main focus. Therefore, I feel there should be one committee.
I think area committees will be good provided they have budgets and are accountable and most importantly are given guidelines or templates to work with. A lot of people who do voluntary committee work do not have business backgrounds and therefore can find it difficult to be fully effective
The idea is good in principle, could make a difference in identifying local issues easier, but need to be convinced of their influence in practice
Yes you need to stop cars being parked on the A2 so people can walk into Sittingbourne without having to walk in the road because cars are parked on the pavement

Probably to reflect local opinion. However my 2 Councillors (Mike and Nicholas) do an admirable job.
Probably, as their opinion would hopefully reflect the local community. However, our 2 Councillors (Mike and Nicholas) already do that admirable
It's a positive idea, however they need to be listened too and given some authority to make positive change.
The boundary between Teynham and Lynsted parish councils lies along the centre of London Road also known as Greenstreet. There is little or no co-operation between the two groups although Lynsted has tried to build bridges to no avail. An overall area committee would hopefully be beneficial and overcome this parochial impasse.
Yes. Provided: a) they remain adequately attended and b) decisions/proposals arising therefrom are acted upon or a) will result anyway
Better relationships
I would like Teynham to remain independent of the larger boroughs of Sittingbourne and Faversham
Yes a rural or village specific one tgat deals with rural and village issues!
Yes as long as they are local people in them. They could make a big difference if they are run correctly
The principle has potential but previous democratic instruments like the Parish Design Statements were simply removed from Planning processes when it suited SBC to silent local democratic instruments. So it will be important that these Committees have freedom to engage on all policy issues without 'gagging' by Officials. They should be independent of local Parish Councils but they should NOT replace them. These new Committees, drawn across parish boundaries, can help inform and reinforce opinions that cut across PC areas of competence. In short, these Committees would add value if they can covr all policy issues and comment on them directly to SBC Councillors free from Parish Council boundaries but informing PC processes. I fear that the Committees will be seen as threats by PCs and may choose to ignore issues over which they don't have sole responsibility - I have seen this regularly along Greenstreet.
Yes - a rural committee covering villages between Sittingbourne & Faversham as our needs are different to those of the towns
Yes to committee as long as areas are individual ie I live in Teynham which is rural and not part of sittingbourne or Faversham and has its own specific needs. It could make a positive difference to address these needs.
Yes, I believe that we should. Our rural villages have a unique identity and unique needs - but we are usually just lumped in with Faversham or Sittingbourne, which are very different. It will give residents more of a feeling of input and interest in their local communities and help support local projects that benefit a wide range of activities and services.
The principal of area committees is a good idea as they will have an understanding of requirements for their area however I suspect more than three will be required.
Yes. If the membership of the committees includes members of the public, it will be a drastic shift in what residents are actually concerned about. People currently feel disenfranchised with local decision making, with Councillors that don't appear to

represent them, rather pushing their own agendas. Some areas have fantastic councillors that are pro-active at consulting residents, others (such as Murston) don't hear from them from one election to the next. Engagement of the local population should be at the core of decision making.
Rural & urban areas should have different types of commitees.
Yes but they need to representative of all
Yes - depending on their remit. I would like a local body that could reflect the views of local people but I am concerned that they do not simply replicate those of Parish councils (which I feel are narrow in their outlook and lack professional respect).
Sounds a good idea, local focus and input to shape the varied communities needs
Only if clear articulated binding parameters are in place regarding a clear transparent process that moderates can abide to. At this point and time reasonable devious and prices agreements have been hijacked by both the hard left and right and the liberal entitled establishment at the cost of true democracy. Without assurance that party politics do not influence this agenda, it is different to endorse.
I think they would be a good idea but it would need to be clear what powers they have and what decisions they could inform and engage with. Its important for local residents to be able to have a say about the communicaty and area they live in to improve public health, wellebing, economy and more.
In principle I can see some benefits- working in smaller units alongside my town council in Faversham for example could be helpful. Although I'm never in favour of committees for committees' sake. They would need to have a very clear remit and the interaction between town/parish councils, these local area committees and Swale council would have to be crystal clear.
Some reservations care must be take to ensure they are inclusive of area demographic. In an ideal world would be a very positive step towards better social cohesion in areas and a sense of community.
I think they would be a very good thing but people would need to be clear about why they are attending them so that aims of the group and seeing a result early on is essential
Potentially more even spread of resources instead of faversham and sittingbourne getting all the money and Sheppey getting nothing
Sheppey needs to have an independent voice as the island is constantly ignored in favour of Sittingbourne.
Yes, if more things are happening at a local level and being decided by the people in that area they are more likely to work and have an effect on how people feel about where they live.
Perhaps, if they are non-political, and made up of general public. There needs to be more accountability for the way public money is spent. A diffrence can only be made when those making important decisions are doing so for the majority. I personally think that many politicians are self serving.
Could work but have a more even balance of the public, Otherwise it's wont work if you put upper class people who most likely don't even live on the area,
With a mixture of members - councillors and members of the public, they could help local communities feel that they have a stake in the decision making

processes of the council. I do support the idea, and hope that the proposition to involve those other than councillors is a genuine one.
Yes. Mote in depth local consultation.
Think maybe if was area committee .certain areas of Swale would not get everything and others nothing
Only if they are well attended by the public.

Question 2: What do you think area committees should do?

This was a multiple choice question and people could choose as few or as many as they liked.

Table 3

Answer Choices	**Responses**	
area based meetings where Councillors take decisions on local matters	54.23%	154
make decisions on what projects get funding from the special projects fund	53.87%	153
consultative (for example actively responding to consultations as part of a deliberative process)	29.93%	85
engagement (for example listening to presentations and giving feedback)	36.62%	104
a combination of engagement and consultative	62.32%	177
Other (please specify)		89
	Answered	**284**
	Skipped	**24**

In the 'other' category people were given a free text box to make their suggestions. These are copied verbatim in the table below

Table 4

None - we already have parish councils and they are full of people with axes to grind who spend our money on what they want.
In view of the response to question 1 this is not relevant.
Not required at all
I'd like to see the main focus on poor areas, areas of deprivation and run down. For example, Sheerness.
Just listening and giving feedback does not really engage - there needs to be a closed loop.system - local council management and operations seem to be open ended with little evidence of setting objectives, working to achieve them and closing them out.
non party political and local resident based on an unbiased basis.
Must include environmental concerns and any decisions on housing and relevant infrastructure
Meet with people in their area, and take on board some of their concerns.
If they go ahead, then consultative only. However, I did put that I do not agree with them, so should have been able to skip to the finish, not go through another 7 questions.
Response carried from the first response.
Not just parish councils as they do not represent the views if all residents just the inner group of people are allowed views
Councillors need to listen to us and not do what they think is best
Include our local public transport agencies to take part
Nothing

Include local people in all relevant discussions and listen to what they say.
AC members should be as involved as possible in matters that impact the people and areas covered by each AC
None
what for. this is just a further waste of our council tax
Nothing. They should not exist, and it is disappointing this question assumes their existence.
Small Planning matters. I.E. 5 or fewer homes, extensions, lofts etc.
Galvanisation of local input. Assessment of real need in comunity and community empowerment to fix itself.
Parishes already make decisions and SBC takes decisions. It's not clear to me where these would be positioned in relation to those. It's seems to be a duplication. Where would Tunstall sit as we are a mix of rural and urban as a Parish.
Don't think it should be just councillors should also be ordinary people also
I don't understand the first point. What local matters would they have powers to decide? Eg, memorial benches? Streetlights? New play equipment?
Hold national MPs responsible for the terrible job they do at representing us.
Listen to local requirements
Not required
None
Nothing
Should be involved in everything
Nothing. Don't need them.
This appears to be an expensive exercise in trying to get the public involved, but offers nothing new
I understand the importance of the role of Councillors in this process, and the Committees would have to ignore their egos and understand that they have a role to inform Councillors - drawn from local rural wards (if these Committees are allowed to encompass more than one Ward). That responsibility requires a mutual trust, so Councillors should be responsive to Committee statements, analysis, and opinions and be ready to face cross-examination if their Rural Committees' views are ignored without cause. I can see that Committees will need careful chairing (perhaps not Councillors) to build the role and mutual trust.
Not exist
Localism needs to be make more public and accessible utilising all public platforms.
Any committee simply made up of councillors should already be happening.. that is what we elect them for. Residents NEED to be a part of the committees and hold equal weight (maybe 2 residents = 1 councillor)
None
None ...weshouldnt have them
I think this list is things they could do, I am not convinced any are things they should do. It seems to me this only works if the public turn up, I expect a flash in the pan and then dwindling numbers, what is in it for the attendees, sure councillors get to claim more expenses and we pay for extra officer time, but what does it give us?
Brainstorming and reviewing.

All commitees should be apolitical
act as intermediaries between professionals, businesses etc and the local residents. To understand both view points on sensitive matters and to offer a balanced view. This is what Parish councils should be doing but fail to.
I do not think we should have the committees at all, all of the above examples are currently available through other structures
Not needed. Already have councillors to take our views forward
All of the above can be done by parish councils. Why not make those areas in Swale that are parished into community councils instead.
Asking local residents what they think are the highest priorities and letting them choose how the funding is spent.
Isn't this what Town and Parish councils do
Meet regularly and offer open to public sessions
None of the above. We already vote for and pay for a Town Council and this would duplicate that.
The options above are limited and restrictive.
These areas can be covered by Sheerness and Swale Council
I disagree with creating area committees - this question has no options which address this decision, a very manipulative measure. If they were to be created, and no doubt without any democratic vote allowed to the enfranchised populous, I have ticked the preferred option.
Including the people in decision making
No
I don't believe it's a good idea to let them Do anything!
Just another way of passing blame and decisions to other people yet swale BC gets all the money to do as they wish
This is the work of a Parish Council
channel for serious ideas
local residents where people can be invited to be heard and as a consultation panel to gather local residents views and feedback to the council on what matters the most and what changes or improvements the residents would like to see in their local area
I do not think Area Committees should be able to be involved in funding. This could lead to disparities in areas, be open for criticism etc
Dont agree with having committees at all, and they would encourage selfishness and division
Must consult 'real' people. Those elected don't.
Triage what is needed and then sack any freeloaders that politic.
Respond sensitively and positively to local representations and concerns, being driven by local needs and not by wider area pressures.
Listen to the concerns of the public about own local ares
Purely advisory status
Local voting on local matters (referendums even) on major matters
Please make them people led - are the councillors parish/town or Borough ? Presentations? Make them Not to boring. Decisions must be made public so the public feel included and engaged.

Public transport issues
None of the above
Not applicable - don’t have them
Councillors are bias to one party or another so any committee needs to be able to control the waste of tax payers money at present controlled by individual councillors who refer to it as "My Money"
We already have Parish Councils to take decisions on local matters.
Eventually making decisions on special funding - weighing up decision making processes clearly for public to see
The importance of any interaction is that it is meaningful to both parties.
None of the above. Waste of time. Consultations are just lip service exercises. Decisions will already have been taken.
too much money has been spent on "consultations" and consultants, high time there was some actual improvements to Sheppey island facilities and infrastructure
Also be allowed to present ideas of their own or ideas of fellow local members of the public.
Such matters should be delegated to existing parish councils.
It should be a mix of all. Members of the public need to be listened to, there is much disenchantment with the political system in this country. Attempts should be made to listen and act on what the general public have to say.
Why go back in time
I do not think we need another level of decision makers
None
None of the above as do not agree with a committee style council
Local complaints
Area committees over the years have been a waste of time.
although prefer not to have them.
Do notneed
None of the above.

Question 3: Who should be invited to attend?

The following text was included with this question in order to manage expectations
Note: Area committees are likely to be fully constituted committees with published agendas, reports and minutes, and with meetings held in public and minuted to record decisions and actions, therefore only borough Councillors could vote on decisions. Other members would be unable to vote in decisions, but would be able to contribute their opinions and views

This was a multiple choice question and people were given the opportunity to choose as many as they wanted

Table 5

Answer Choices	**Responses**	
Swale borough Councillors	65.07%	190
local Kent county council Councillors	35.96%	105
representatives from local parish and town councils	72.26%	211
local service delivery partners (such as Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, Optivo, Swale Community and Voluntary Services etc)	67.12%	196
Other (please specify)	47.60%	139
	Answered	**292**
	Skipped	**16**

The 'other' category included a free text box and responses have been copied verbatim into table 6 below

Table 6

to include Community Warden, Coastguards, Environment Agency
Members of the public not on parish council
I don't think committees work well if they are too big. I don't know how many SBC councillors will already be on this committee. I think there needs to be some representation of KCC and local parishes but not too many. Local service delivery partners could attend the meeting as required.
You might as well invite Mickey Mouse, the Queen of Sheba and Vlad the Impaler.
In view of the answer to question 1 this question is not relevant
Nobody
Public
Local, non-associated members (residents/ general public) or possible elected local representatives (residents)
Those attending should be required to report on objectives and deliverables and be made accountable for delivering tham
residents directly affected by decision making i.e. public being given time to voice concerns rather than 1 representative only and 3 minutes on major planning developments e.g. major Attwood 700 Outline application where over 250 objectors had 1 representative and only 3 minutes. Other parties directly effected had to fight for

a forum for their legitimate and legal based opinion to be put before the planning councillors.
Health welfare and social care services
Members of the public not necessarily connected to an existing organisation
I do not agree with them, but if they are brought in, they should be consultative, with the Borough Councillors and members of the public.
Representatives from the local residents. In the same way parents will sit on a board of governers in a school or an executive committee in scouting. They are there to ensure the people who live in the area are remembered. The number could be limited to 3 or 4.
School representatives
Resident groups
Occasionally and when needed...particular experts ie concerning wildlife/environmental concerns.
Not sure
I do not think that the area committees would serve any purpose which cannot be done by groups which exist already.
Voluntary groups.
Numbers should be small and meetings as informal as possible - so although membership types should not be restrictive (so good enthusiasts should not be excluded) numbers should be kept low to avoid Meetingitus. There is arguably unsatisfactory history here.
Again - public transport operatives need to take part and invited as the local bus service is worse than dire
Local community groups
Local community groups
Representatives from local community groups
Resident's Representation where Public Consultation has taken place
Local people living in the affected area
Nobody
Members of the public if they have shown interest in the subject matter eg if they have started a petition locally. Which members of the public are invited would have to change each time
Resident groups Community groups/clubs
Education providers - a complete cross section of the community
A resident representative
Anyone who wants to attend. Should be inclusive.
Residents
dont waste your time
Again this question assumes their existence.
Resident groups in non parished areas.
People who are effected by desicions
Any resident

If a decision is to be made around parks then the Swale youth forum or youth organisations should be involved. If there is a decision on housing all social housing/ homeless service providers should have an invite. Let's get the right people to the meetings
For our village representatives from the school would be a good idea too.
Residents who are affected by specific projects or issues.
Local residents
Members of the public
Local residents
Local residents
Community representatives, local businesses, charities, schools
Not required
None
Other representatives of communities from local organisations
NO
Nobody as they are not needed.
Independent Volunteers
Everyone - have open meetings - I personally loved the local engagement meeting as a member of the public you could meet and ask questions about what effected you.
Local residents
If the happen then public.
Dont do this
.
Local delivery partners - only invite if a particular issue is being discussed.
None. Not giving parish councillors a vote isn't right. This is wasting taxpayer money. I don't understand how this will work. You will have a lot more work on your hands
Ordinary residents.
All meetings should be live streamed and public comments allowed and admistrated as such. Be the transparent example.
RESIDENTS! Input should be sought from everyone that is able to benefit local decision making.
general public
No one - they are not needed
We shouldn't have them
Why would these agencies attend, the proposal seems to suggest they are simply consultees, a position they already have but rarely use
No one, what is the point, the case is not made
Local people who feel interested in the area.
Locally nominated persons
Residents
established local business leaders and people invested in the area
No one
Not needed. Have enough bureaucracy
All of the above are invited to parish meetings

Local residents, even though they cannot vote.
Leave it to local councils
Members of the public! KCC councillors and local service delivery partners should be allowed to attend in an advisory capacity when necessary. Otherwise, we're just creating another level of bureaucracy with the same heads in attendance!
The relevant agencies and charities that need to support decisions being made and part of the wider community, on the ground working directly with the community. Maybe offer a couple of independent public seats who are not directly involved with the council. Most certainly at least one Food Bank organiser to provide input from this perspective.
No one
The General Public
Members of the public, Teachers, Swale Citizens Advice, NHS Local Primary Care Networks, Youth Workers.
Anyone from the local population who wishes to attend and who lives in the respective area, is of voting age, has a clean criminal record, who is unaffiliated to any political party and has never stood for any local authority seat or parish council seat in the past. Where more than 5 people apply a vote in the respective 'local' area should be held and the most successful 5 appointed for one year.
Local residents who actually live in the areas
Members that include local residents
Local Faversham councillors only. With contributions only from others such as Swale borough councillors,kent police,kent fire,Swale community and voluntary services.
Why is this question mandatory when I don't agree with the idea of area committees in the first place?
No One
Anyone who wants to.
Members of the community especially those who volunteer on community projects, these people are often those who are already involved in the area more so than elected officials
Residents
No barring should be in place but attendees from other bodies should be invited as appropriate.
If they are formed then Local Clerks should be invited
Faversham Society
Local housing associations should also be invited to attend, as they may be able to offer advice, support, resources or maybe even wish to take on some matters themselves.
This is sounding to be yet another bureaucratic committee. Members of the public should be able to vote as they are providing the funds through taxation.
people who live in the area
past parish and town councillors councillors
local residents and key business owners
Local businesses who may help with future funding in way of sponsorship/partnerships.

Local volunteers
local residents and members of local voluntary organisations e.g. churches, youth groups, community organisations
The community. We could do it via a WhatsApp group
Everyone should be involved as too many decisions are made without proper input from residents and other parties.
Individuals who demonstrate they will be negatively impacted by proposed projects.
Build in time to listen to others
It appeared originally that this was a way of permitting the electorate to have an educated say on what goes on in our area - from the options above it appears to be another level of elected members all mingled together; these people already gave a weekly/monthly say in what happens in our area. The electorate just has to listen, accept and moan.
Local committees must be able to be involved in the voting process or it is not valued by the people and dont bother with it!
Local people or local businesses
Also members of the public who care but are not part of a group - independent thinkers can have some interesting alternative ideas
Local special interest and pressure groups (for specific issues)
n/a
Not applicable - don’t have them
only borough Councillors could vote on decisions there for question 2 is irrelevent as would be any committee, just another way to claim expenses.
If only Borough Councillors can vote there is no point any one sitting on these unnecessary committees
Anyone who the committee considers desirable in the matter(s) under discussion
Local people. Bus companies
If they are implemented then all stakeholders need to be invited to ensure decisions can be made
Members of the public
Public
All depending on the nature/agenda of the meeting.
Members of Parliament
residents
Town Team, other local action groups ie "Plastic Free Sheerness"
Selected members of the public
Delegate to Parish Councils
Don’t agree
Members of the public, for a specified term, to avoid them becoming dominated by individuals
Qqqq
A combination of Swale councillors and residents of that area. I feel that the full council itself should approve or not the recommendations of the area committees, not

have spending decions etc made by people who could be marching to the beat of another band.
Not needed. Use parish councils with public participation
If you're talking about transparency then surely anyone needing it wanting to attend these meeting should be entitled to go
Residents as well
Should not happen
Unnecessary
service delivery partners ? has this got a cost ? more expenses ?
Non governmental NGOs who operate on swale
None of the above.
None

Question 4: How many committees should there be and which areas should they cover?

(a link to a ward map was provided)

Table 7

Answer Choices	Responses	
Three covering:- Faversham (Abbey; Boughton and Courtenay; East Downs; Priory; St Ann's; Teynham and Lynsted; and Watling)- Sittingbourne (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Chalkwell; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; West Downs; and Woodstock)- Sheppey (Minster Cliffs; Queenborough and Halfway; Sheerness; Sheppey Central; and Sheppey East)	18.48%	51
Four covering - Faversham (as above)- Sittingbourne urban (Chalkwell; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; and Woodstock)- Sittingbourne rural (Bobbing, Iwade and lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; West Downs) - Sheppey (as above)	54.35%	145
Other (please specify)	27.27%	75
	Answered	**276**
	Skipped	**32**

Again the 'other' category included a free text box and responses have been copied verbatim into the table below

Table 8

None. They will be a total waste of time and OUR money.
None
There needs to be some 'competition' between them when reporting back on progress and deliverable.
I do not agree with them, but if they are brought in, as another administrative tier which will come out of my council tax, then there should be no more than 3.
Anything that includes Milstead as that seems to have been forgotten!
None
As above 4 but include bredgar tunstall rodmersham
None
I think this is a waste of time and money but if you're not going to listen then at least make it relevent to local people, therefore the smaller coverage the better
There should be none and it is disappointing that "none" is not given as a choice.
If it's more than three it would be unfair advantage as normal to sittingbourne
five covering Faversham Town, Abbey, Priory St Ann;s Watling Faversham Rural Boughton and Courtney, East Downs, Teynham & Lynsted

Sittingbourne Urban (as above) Sittingbourne Rural (As Above) Sheppey (As Above)
Why is Sheppey east always last as if secondary
None
None
None as not needed
Rural committee
Maybe the Teynham area could sit on 2 committees
Teynham conyer lynsted and other rural villages should have thei own group as the issues that face rural communities are different to tjose that face towns.
Teynham should have its own rural committee
Teynham is rural so why not include it as rural.
In addition to the four: I would like to see a rural committee which included Lynsted and Teynham, Newnham, Doddington, Rodmersham, Milstead.
Five. If you get sufficient responses from rural wards, perhaps there should be a 'cross boundary' and independent "Rural Voice Committee"? I suspect that would be like herding cats and pretty impossible to chair. I can also see hostility from Parish Councils. Perhaps, if SBC resists a truly "Rural Voice" each of the dominant parties (Sittingbourne and Faversham) should be prepared to set up local sub-groups with responsibility for researching/engaging with the 'mother ships'. Without a "Rural VOice Committee" we will be no better off than we are today - the urban voices always trump the rural voice - and you have to ask yourselves, "why would rural communities engage with a process that fails to represent their voices/opinions. Without "Rural VOice Committee", rural voices will continue to be fractured.
An additional area to cover rural areas east of sittingbourne and on the north downs
I think there should be five. Faversham, Sittingbourne urban, Sittingbourne rural, sheppy and teynham, lynsyed and norton. Teynham lnsted and noton section can include all out lying villages who do not usually get a voice on matters. Especially things like planning
Why is Teynham connected to Faversham? Teynham is a very fast expanding village and feel we should stand alone. We do not get the funding that either Faversham or Sittingbourne receive currently. So being attached to either would mean our services wouldn't taken into consideration.
Teynham has its own specific needs being more rural than Faversham and should be its own area
Can Teynham, Lynsted, Norton, Doddington, Newnham, Oare not have their own area? Similar to the beneficent structure
Five Faversham urban Faversham rural including teynham and Lynsted

Sittingbourne urban Sittingbourne rural Sheppey
.
The Meads to come in with Sittingbourne Rural
0 this won't work. It's evident from the previous administration. Your wasting taxpayer money.
The committees should reflect areas of common interest in the matters likely to be considered. Urban and rural areas often have little in common and it may be better to have a separate committee for the rural areas around Faversham.
If you look at the make of houses paying council tax. The grps should be decided on income generation. To bigger grps will lead to a dilution of local talent.
None These questions are very biased and assume everyone thinks it a good idea. Poor survey
None ...make the current structures work !
I do not believe the case is made for any, but if it is to give us a local say then more rather than less would seem the obvious conclusion, but the cost rises and there is no evidence it will have an impact
One covering Teynham lynsted and local hamlets
Teynham & Lynsted should NOT be part of faversham . Would be better suited as Sittingbourne rural.
I do not agree with the concept at all, but if they are created I think Four is better than Three but don't see any rationale for placing Teynham and Lynsted into Faversham, except the cynical one that it is fiddling with the supposed non political balance of the committee. WE are part of the circle of 'rural' that surrounds Sittingbourne, not a satellite of Faversham
.
More committees! More meetings the majority of the electorate of Swale will not attend. How long will the idea last this time? There is a reason these were scrapped before
None
If I had to choose one of these options I'd choose the four. However, the area committees idea opens up the possibility of a genuine democratic process. Yes, the Parish Councils are very local but in practice few members of the public get actively involved. We need more area committees where more ordinary people can get involved, would want to do so and have real power to change things.
None
I live on The Meads but fall under the political boundary of Bobbing. I receive no benefit whatsoever from Bobbing PC except a paltry little notice board at the Meads shops. The boundary of the Meads is wrong. How would you justify my having to be 'Sittingbourne Rural'? Ridiculous to have four. Three committees would be the only way to divide this authority area, as flawed, divisive, ill- considered and partisan as it could not help to be.

None
None. There's no reason for them.
Faversham, Sittingbourne, Sheppey and AONB
- Faversham (as above) - Sittingbourne urban (Chalkwell; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads) - Sittingbourne rural (Bobbing, Iwade and lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; West Downs, Woodstock) - Sheppey (as above)
If it is allocation of this £1 million budget, then it should be one committee covering all of Swale with fair representation from Faversham, Sittingbourne and Sheppey to prevent any bias. There is no reason why one member from each of the 3 areas couldn't co-ordinate ideas and provide a short list ahead of the meetings, but beyond that is would mean too much bureaucracy, which the public are tired of. Too costly and talk doesn't get things done!
Each ward should have their own committee
Four, but Sittingbourne Rural to become Swale Rural, comprising what you have in Sittingbourne Rural plus Boughton & Courtenay, East Downs, Teynham & Lynsted
Faversham. Sittingbourne is a lost cause.
All depends on what the committees are expected to do. Separating out by area divides. Why not by topic? Planning, grants, finance etc - these committees then advise the SBC who can accept or reject.
I would say 5, two on sheppey as its a big area to cover for one committee.
Teynham etc ward is very big - maybe a Faversham rural
None
Not applicable - don't have them
NONE
The whole of the Borough under auspices of Councillors.
Urban, Rural and Coastal.
None a waste of time and money
Qqq
Sheppey only
Don't agree there is a need
NO COMMITTEES
There shouldn't be any.
Again, the whole of Swale as do not agree with comitee style led council.
Where is Tonge on this list?
None
As a resident of Teynham (a rural area) why are we not in the rural option for the 4 option?
None
None.
No

Given the question that the working group had around where Teyhnam and Lynstead should go, we have also analysed specifically results from anyone who identified as coming from that area. In total 26 people stated that they lived in Teynham and Lynsted ward area

Table 9

Answer Choices	Responses	
Three covering:- Faversham (Abbey; Boughton and Courtenay; East Downs; Priory; St Ann's; Teynham and Lynsted; and Watling)- Sittingbourne (Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Chalkwell; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; West Downs; and Woodstock)- Sheppey (Minster Cliffs; Queenborough and Halfway; Sheerness; Sheppey Central; and Sheppey East)	7.5%	2
Four covering - Faversham (as above)- Sittingbourne urban (Chalkwell; Homewood; Kemsley; Milton Regis; Murston; Roman; The Meads; and Woodstock)- Sittingbourne rural (Bobbing, Iwade and lower Halstow; Borden and Grove Park; Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch; West Downs) - Sheppey (as above)	35%	9
Other (please specify)	50%	13
No response	7.5%	2

All of the 'other' responses are highlighted in yellow in the table 8 above. Where it is obvious that the respondee is a resident of Teynham (although they have not stated this in question 8) these responses are highlighted in green.

Question 5: What role would the public have?

Again this was a question where you could choose more than one answer. There was also an 'other' category where the respondent could write some text to explain what they would like to see.

Table 10

Answer Choices	**Responses**	
Speaking about an item	71.85%	194
Nominating particular project for funding	64.44%	174
Advocating for a particular project for funding	61.85%	167
Other (please specify)	30.37%	82
	Answered	**270**
	Skipped	**38**

Table 11 is all of the text copied verbatim from all 'other' responses

Table 11

Without public involvement this exercise is meaningless.
Being dictated to by people who are more interested in civering the area with houses for outsiders and wastingour money on the "regeneration" of Sittingboiurne High Street, together with the associated stupiduty of changing road layouts and re-routing the A2 through Sittingbourne Station forecourt and between huge new buildings that overpower the area.
In view of the answer to question 1 this is not really relevant.
All the above presently available by other routes, why duplicate?
Seeing the evidence of the committees' work
If they go ahead, then I believe they should be consultative, so the public's role should be in speaking and asking questions about the relevant consultations.
The same as they do for other elected bodies now
Be able to otain the views of all the local people and services that would be affected
Highlighting issues
The public should also have the option to speak for longer than 3 minutes (Parish council rule) if the matter is complex, also to question and receive an answer within a reasonable time frame. If the question is answered at the meeting and the response is not to the questioner's satisfaction then further questions should be allowed. Questions asked by the public at Council meetings sometimes received blindingly obvious or irrelevant answers.
As consultants to advise on projects during planning and implementation.
Having ability to vote o.n decisions
None
Do you really think they will turn up?

It should ask “could” not “would”. The assumption again is that the decision to create these committees has already been taken and this consultation is a merely box-ticking. Shameful.
Positions of responsibility with involvement of working parties
Open and transparency
We should have over all say what the decision should be as all trust has gone in governing bodies
Not required
None
I think they should have a vote on a particular matter, where they have a proven track record of knowledge and campaigning. Often these community members are more knowledgeable than the politicians and less likely yto be voting for short term political gain.
Nothing
everyone should involved in everything
W
They won't turn up after the first two meetings, when they find out it does nothing of value to them
Initiate policy statements where a particular "Rural Voice" emerges from (e.g. central government or public debate) with some confidence that the Councillors must respond?
Should be time limited
Complaining about the useless use of taxpayer money to pay for this project.
Participation by ordinary residents should give a better knowledge of the 'grass roots' situation in the area.
As much as possible. You also need to think about layout. Do not hold a top table layout you will alienate people immediately. If your goal is empowerment do not allow a table to divide yourselves before u even start.
Residents should be given not only a voice but a say. Councillors alone are not always reliable as representative of the local residents. Legally they don't even need to reside in the area they are representing, this is ridiculous, if you want real input from the committees, you need real residents speaking on behalf of residents.
None - they will say no to everything that has an immediate personal impact on them. Needs to be a wider decision by local authority
Don’t do it
They can have whatever role you allow them, the question is what would they like? I think they would like to have a say, but how does this provide a say above and beyond their current ward representation and a say in what?
Observational and reflective.
Places & voting rights on various commitees
None whatsoever
.

The public can speak a parish council meetings. Do you really believe they are more likely to come to this and speak? The public should have a full role whatever the mechanism.
Committees duplicating work of local councils
Decision-makers. The public have had enough of traditional politics (particularly at a Parliament level). They want something different; they want 'People Power'; this could be a chance to give them it. The local people should be able to mandate their representatives who should enact their wishes. No more party-politicking; genuine direct democracy; that simple.
Being involved hands on
None.
The ability to voice their opinions
These questions are too vague and similar. What about the role being more strategic, I.e how will significant town plan or approved development become part of the community and the need to phase in infrastructure supporting significant development a role for this new framework?
Whatever the public wish to raise. If by creating these committees you do not trust the local councillors to adequately represent their electoral populous then you should give full audience to the local voting population.
There should be members of the public on the committee's who have a say AND a vote
Representative membership on the committee's
Not sure why funding keeps being brought up, but the public should contribute to the committee whether that be orally or written, with no prerequisite on funding. In many cases I see these committees being set up to resovle local issues that in many cases do not require funding and require input from the community.
None
W
Committee members
And Voting. It is our money the council are spending!
Full participation including voting rights
Giving information about the area they live in and it's issues, problems and needs
feedback on local issues and the opportunity in coming up with solutions and support for the council. Its imporatnt that local people can identify and feedback on issues and important matters for their area.
The 'public' must have a say in everything!
Help triage problems. Be involved at every level
Public should have a say in how council use resources and send money
Opposing funding of a particular project
Relating personal feelings about their own areas
Advisory
Voting on major decisions especially housing, roads, and contracts that dont work (think KCC grass cutting corners)
Input, some local people have better ideas or alternative ideas
I believe the public are the key and need to be more included

Not applicable - don't have them
It would serve no purpose as already stated in question 3, only borough Councillors could vote on decisions. They should already be holding surgeries to meet the people they represent
None
Bringing to attention generally the state of matters prevailing in their wards whether matters of commission or omission which have effect on their quality of life or which which are in contravention of prescribed rules or procedures
Engaging local community schools churches, businesses and setting up voluntary groups to ensure area is pleasant to live in and offers social engagement opportunities
All, depending on the agenda/purpose of the meeting
Should be put to a referendum first. Councillors fought against Sheerness body so why the change?
Join a Parish Council
Don't agree
Involved on the same level as other committee members, with voting rights on allocation of funds
Voting on a recommendation to be sent to full council for approval
Via full council, joint transportation board etc or via their locally elected member
Under this coalition council, the public wouldn't be given a role.
Local complaint page ?
It won't make a difference. Never has done
None. Again, unqualified people making decisions.
No

Question 6: How often would you be willing to attend an area committee?

Table 12

Answer Choices	Responses	
Quarterly (4 times a year)	52.84%	121
Six monthly (2 times a year)	11.79%	27
Bi-monthly (6 times a year)	17.47%	40
Other (please specify)		52
	Answered	**229**
	Skipped	**79**

Table 13

Never. Better things to do with my time.
In view of the answer to question1 this question is not really relevant.
None
And as necessary to see that progress is being made with the activities
Any more than twice a year - depending on the consultations - would just attract the same old people from organisations and groups with a vested interest.
When possible
I wouldnt
I myself am unlikely to be available or indeed appropriate to attend.
In addition to bi-monthly the need could arise for extraordinary meetings to be arranged in the event of unexpected developments
Never
I give them two meetings maximum
Never. These would be expensive to run, an enormous drain on already stretched council workers.
Monthly
0
Never
Never
Don't need them
Formal meetings (quarterly or bi-monthly) must also have ability to 'convene virtually' through email exchanges initiated by the Chair and Secretary - 'virtual Committee' Meetings to be able to react to issues that have short 'lead in' times.
This is a waste of money.
Plus any meeting called due to special circumstances.
Even monthly if the need arises
None
None
I see no point in attending, the case is not made
Dont do it

.
Depends how effectual the meetings are. If the majority of money is already spent; the meetings are pointless
Never
They should be able to be called for important reasons between these times.
Never.
Committee specific attendances, which may mean resolving the committee objective within weeks/months. Anything that goes into years needs a serious review of its objectives.
Never
More times than any representative from Tonge Parish Council intends to, for the sole purpose of pushing back on any schemes they have an interest in. You see what a shambles it would quickly become? Just like Westminster!
Monthly
It should be driven by when there is budget to allocate. It is pointless listening to a problems / wish list from the public if there are not resources available to address the issues raised.
Every month
Meetings are full of overplayed paper pushers that like the sound of their voice. These 'meetings' should be digital and everyone has a say
3 meeting a year - meet up every 4 months ,
n/a
Not applicable - don’t have them
Never
Weekly
I wouldn't.
I wouldn’t
Never - area committees not needed
I could manage monthly.
None- as do not agree
None. There shouldn’t be one
When needed
Should not happen
None.
No

Question 7: Any other, comments, thoughts or suggestions?

This was a totally open ended question with a free text box. We had 134 responses to this question and they are shown verbatim below. 173 people didn't answer this question.

Although I am not a member of Facebook, there are some local forums with some great ideas debated by people who'd never approach official channels to get their ideas pushed forward. These are small things like siting of bins, benches etc, ideas for 'empty' spaces, childrens groups that may like some one off funding etc. It would be great if these groups were browsed by 'people with power', to get these ideas directed to where they may be acted upon. Maybe these Area Committees could have their own Facebook page.
There needs to be a clear need for these area committees defined and desired and indeed in some instances led by the public otherwise this will peter out like neighbourhood watch has done.
Stop buiding more and more houses for people who don't live in the area and who are making already overstretched resources and infrastructure likely to collapse completely.
None
Just making more trains for the gravy.... Where does the money for this come from? Surely preserving and indeed improving services is a better use of resources.
Having gone through the survey, I 'now' realise it wasn't just about one area. I did find the survey quite confusing and did not feel clear on what I was answering.
In theory this is a great idea. Where it will fail is if decisions are made alongside political party lines rather than what the local residents wish. Also, there should be clarity on share of the funds for each committee/ area or which ever way the funds are made available - ensuring that the funds are shared fairly, not based on total population in the committee's area (voters)
It should be clear what funds are available, what they can be used for, how they are allocated, how they are being used, what the deliverables are and how they are being met. It should show how effective funds are and the return-in whatever form is applicable- that is benefiting the community.
I am concerned at misrepresentation of opinions as "law" or "facts" reported in minutes and published in local press. Also the lack of respect evident in some public comments on local matters. Inflammatory comments by the public should be discouraged as this "muddies" the actual mater being discussed and deliberated upon and can lead to effectually "public bullying" (lynch mob mentality) rather than reasoned debate. Passionate views are one thing but when this spills over into public abuse and inflammatory and incorrect "facts" on SBC web sites needs monitoring and respect reminders being also published to (oft repeat) offenders.
The environmental and infrastructure
This committee is really needed for Swale to get input from the general public
Any public involvement including parish councils would be advantageous
Whilst difficult, it is important to include people who have an interest in the community but not necessarily party politics or attached to an existing organisation which could lead to a conflict of interest

If you really want to engage with the public go out to where they live - set up a stall by the local shops, or on the village green
None
This will work if the people who live in the area are included on the committee.
Just to include small businesses and residents of each village
It's great to hear that the current council want to get the public involved. The former council couldn't care less about what public thought and went ahead and did what benefited themselves (housing developments which are unsuitable for the area). Great job guys! Keep it up ☺
Vary location of meeting and publish agenda publically in advance to allow public involvement. Possibly...if a particularly major funding is being considered....set that meeting in an accessible place for those who may be affected.
Fear that the usual "mouth pieces" get on these committees. Residents would be resentful!
I cannot see that hey would serve any useful purpose, they would have a cost to administer and the means of making such decisions already exists through using local representatives.
My family no longer goes into Sittingbourne town as we do not feel safe.
None
Involve local community groups and volunteers
I admire the aspiration but (perhaps through ignorance) am not persuaded that there should be another layer of consultation. It might be better to have 4 (or 3) Area-based readily accessible web noticeboards of suggestions, one list being from local councillors in the 4 Areas and another from the public. There could be brief comment areas. This could broaden areas of thinking and facilitate solutions by Councillors, if they chose to address issues. But of course there could be downsides too.
personal attendance, if unable, could also include correspondence via e-mail
Very pleased to see the public are now being more widely consulted rather than having unpopular decisions thrust upon them. Thank you
Make sure local people know about these initiatives - I hadn't seen this survey personally, it was shared by a Faversham Facebook group I belong to. Using social media and opt-in email Comms would be useful as this is how a large number of people communicate these days.
It's no wonder people don't fill these questionnaires in, answers and decisions have already been made!
We should prioritise reducing pollution and conserving nature and green spaces urgently
N/A
.
Excellent idea, as long as the committees really do stay local and are not hi-jacked by politics, parties and government officials.
The people should have as much input that affects that community
No
No

I think this could help in bringing a bit of pride to the area, which is what I think Swale lacks. Plus consulting with local communities is key to so many other funding streams that if you are doing it already it will unlock so much more funding (providing there are the officers to bid for the funding or community groups who could bid on the council's behalf)
If people are good enough to collect council tax from, then they should be good enough to vote how it's spent too. It's one thing to vote for councillors to manage the affairs of the council but they shouldn't be responsible for all decisions on their own
Feel it essential there is an accessible way for the “ordinary” person to be heard at these committees
Political apathy will take over and sadly they won’t work. Good idea but democracy will win.
None
The role of the Area Committees must be clearly designed to enhance decision making for Swale without undermining the Parish Councils and local independence.
Having area Facebook pages would be good for councilors to stay in contact with local issues. MPs too would be the hope.. But ours doesn't really like listening to the local people 😂
do something more practical and as local as possible, why would someone in Iwade, go to a meeting in Sittingbourne to discuss something in Murston?
Area committees are a waste of time, will achieve nothing without power and money, will achieve divisions if they are allocated power and money (does Sheppey get more to spend than Faversham?) , and they will be expensive to staff.
No
I would want there to be real extra added value. We already have Parish Councils and can attend Borough meetings. There is also KALC. If this is just a funding mechanism then paper applications and a board would be more efficient use of resources. If it’s a forum for discussion make sure it doesn’t duplicate existing mechanisms.
Open and honest
no
.
It’s a great idea to get residents to participate in local issues
Make these councillors past & present accountable for the waist of public funds
If merged with Faversham Engagement Forum this would be a great way to ensure public engagement (The forum does include the parishes of Boughton Dunkirk Graveney & Selling)
No
It’s a waste of money
Waste of time
Stupid idea. We have parish and town councils for some of this and also this is what I think our elected councillors should be doing anyway.
No

Teynham and Lynsted have felt ignored and neglected by Borough and County particularly in relation to transport and roads which are greatly affected by planning issues.
Change venues so all areas get to visit each others areas
No
Rural areas shouldn't be lumped in with towns the issues they face are different!
Online portal for residents to give direct feedback on issues- will give residents an opportunity to offer solutions/ suggestions/vent etc with a ‘what you said’ ‘what we did’. This will make people feel their opinions are heard but also addressed or not and if not why not.
Teynham needs to fall under the Faversham area as its more appropriate
Save public money or better still pass it to pc's to use for their area. Area committees are not needed.
Some idea of how this is different may help, but as it is it seems like a poorly thought through quango, designed to give the appearance of public involvement, the same public who don't turn out to elect representatives in the first place
If you don't want mass abandonment by rural residents, you really need quickly to establish actions based on their interests (as appropriate of course). In our community, we have seen two significant projects fail because of lack of communication and accountability of Officials and Councillors - the downgrading of the Parish/Village Design Statement (Please reinstate them into local planning instruments!); and the "Greening Greenstreet" project (Championed by the late John Disney) simply allowed to withered and died by both Parish COuncils involved. This failure of responsibility or ownership by PCs makes the strongest argument for the creation of a "Rural Voice Committee".
Keep up the good work
This is an excellent idea which would gain far more support if it were more widely publicised. I have only seen the consultation on Facebook, which is not used by all. However this moves forward, it is imperative that it is inclusive... particularly in the engagement of young people.
No
Make sure that this consultation is valid. Ask for names or addresses because somebody could do many supporting or many against. You didn’t think this out. Wouldn’t be surprised if you tamed this consultation.
Basically a very good idea provided that don't involve too many restrictions on the way members can participate.
RESIDENTS RESIDENTS RESIDENTS These committees are pointless if not including residents. If it's another councillor only function then there is no point, I expect councillors to already be meeting and discussing their local areas, progressing issue and affecting change. If they are not, they are not doing what they were elected for.
Poor survey - assumes everyone will think it’s a good idea. Appalling idea
Area committees are a way of local people engaging with their elected representatives. Other authorities can also attend to update residents and councillors on local issues
-

Why do it ?
Council engaging with the community is always good practice as involve the citizens and their contribution to the area development
Sepearte rural from urban areas please, the demands & differences are akin toi chalk & cheese
These committees should offer a very different offer to the current Parish councils to avoid duplication. Furthermore they should draw upon a more professional base for credibility and effectiveness.
Residents with professional backgrounds should be identified to give their expertise on given areas
Why not give the funds, or a significant portion of them to local ward councillors, there is no reason why the couldn't cooperate across ward boundaries if there was reason to do so
.
Use the elected bodies that already exist. Why make more meetings that even fewer people will attend or the ‘same faces’.
N/A
In Faversham and surrounding villages local councils are performing
As I have indicated already, this is a golden opportunity. However talk is not good enough. Will politicians do what they should be doing, that is: hand power to the people and be the representatives they should be? Or is this another paper exercise designed to make more people in suits look good?to make
This is adding another layer of beurecracy which will cost taxpayers more mine. The old area committees were very poorly attended and added no value. They should definitely not be allowed to allocate Mon.
This committee will not meet regularly enough to decide planning issues. It would be a good idea if the committee created working groups to liaise with developers and forthcoming sites for consideration.
No expenses to be paid to any local authority or parish councillor or other committee member. Local authority or parish councillors to declare at the meeting if they are or intend to claim expenses 're their attendance at the meeting. Basic subsidence only to be provided at each meeting - tea, coffee & biscuits. All meetings to be held at locations within the respective area and no location to hold a meeting twice running. All meetings to be open to the public. No agendas, meetings or minutes to be restricted or closed to public or press access or attendance.
Local residents (at least 2) should bee included on the committee's to show the council's willingness to include residents in decisions being made about the areas in which they live
Only choose committees with very specific objectives,always use a rotating chair(becomes to political otherwise). Make sure the committees are not trying to solve global issues,stick to local ones. Any committee that cannot resolve objective of the committee locally(can use third parties,police,fire brigade,local communities) then the committee should be disbanded.
Scrap this waste of tax payers money

You know as well as I do that these committees will be headed by the friends and family of parish councillors, so would be of no benefit to anyone but themselves.
It's vital that the public and community leaders more than elected members have a greater voice at these meetings. Elected members already have a number of meetings and roles where they hold the sway of power and influence
Only local residents can truly know the needs of their local community. It makes sense for them to have resources to enable them to meet those needs
How will the committees interact with the Local Councils
Very good idea
Not at this time.
none
Definitely no fiscal powers or responsibilities, that is for Councillors who are elected .
Ensure meetings are well publicised and varied locations
no
No
Not at this time.
Communication from the Council to the public is fundamental. Whilst social media is the 'go to' method, we also have a large age group who prefer the local newspaper and hard copy correspondence. The SBC has failed in the past to ensure its entire electorate is fully informed (which, when part of a consultation process, left it wide open for criticism that it did not want public participation). "Inside Swale" mag is helpful if you want to know about bins and recycling, but less gloss and more editorial would make it far better. THE SBC website is just dire compared with other Councils. It lacks design and isn't user friendly.
Don't hire private firms like kingdom that line their own pockets by pouncing on unsuspecting public. The fact that they're here at all makes me think the whole process is currupt
Make sure their is time for people to have a say
It is truly visionary that the council is even considering it, well done. You MUST allow locals to vote on major stuff, especially roads, planning and similar projects.
Members of Newnham Parish Council question the need for what appears to be a fourth tier of local democracy and bureaucracy in decision making, with its inherent financial repercussions. We agree with the ethos of devolving power making and decisions to local areas. However, Parish Councillors are also elected members, who are closest to the community and would be better placed to help decide what is needed in their areas. Parish Council meetings already provide an opportunity to the local community to observe and take part in decision-making. It appears as though you are trying to re-invent the wheel.
The idea is a waste of tax payers money
Our councillors are already busy people with so many meetings to attend they really do not need any more
Vary careful consideration would need to be given to membership and a realistic, formal written constitution.

I think care needs to be taken that the local community is genuinely involved and listened to in these meetings and that the complications of decision making processes are clearly laid out
These should have a say on housing, infrastructure, local needs etc
Love the idea of involving communities in decisions making and being consulted. The challenge will be in attracting participation, more so possibly in some areas than others, and maintaining attendance. Strong community champions may be required.
First ask electorate if they want it. Do not take response to this on line survey as a guide to the whole borough wanting this.
Nil
Great idea, when can we start
If area committees are set up, I would be interested in being a member of the public for the Sheppey area. Could you please let me know what I would need to do to participate? Thank you.
This could be a good thing. But please make sure that money is not squandered on setting this up if it isn't going to work. I think everyone has a part to play in making this country a better place for everyone.
Why are you trying to add another layer of bureaucracy and cost to the taxpayers Why not leave it as it is
Would like to see non associated members of the public at the forefront of this type of committee otherwise it will be a case of tooooooo many chiefs etc
Work on current parish councils instead . They can engage their parishes, allocate funds etc
I think I have already said what i need to
Just think it should be a mix of Councillors and residents
More consultation opportunities the better.
Why change what already works well for residents and increase costs to the tax payers of Swale
Keep the current system and don’t time warp back to the 1970s!!!
Get the local schools involved
Please no
Waste of time. Has this new council not good enough things to do other than pass things to the public. Do your job and make decisions.
Be rid of this ludicrous, ancient idea.
great idea

Question 8 What ward do you live in?

167 people answered this question, 11 of those who answered were not clear with their responses or used the free text box to say they didn't want to say where they were from.

Answer Choices	**Responses**	
Abbey	1.20%	2
Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow	5.39%	9
Borden and Grove Park	20.96	35
Boughton and Courtenay	2.40%	4
Chalkwell	1.80%	3
East Downs	3.59%	6
Hartlip, Newlington and Upchurch	4.19%	7
Homewood	7.19%	12
Kemsley	2.40%	4
Milton Regis	1.80%	3
Minster Cliffs	1.20%	2
Murston	1.80%	3
Priory	0.60%	1
Queenborough and Halfway	1.80%	3
Roman	1.80%	3
Sheerness	2.99%	5
Sheppey Central	1.80%	3
Sheppey East	1.20%	2
St Ann's	2.40%	4
Teynham and Lynstead	15.57%	26
The Meads	0.60%	1
Watling	4.19%	7
West Downs	4.19%	7
Woodstock	2.40%	4
Unclear	6.59%	11
	Answered	**167**
	Skipped	**140**

Appendix II

AREA COMMITTEES – SUGGESTED DELEGATIONS IN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To decide its own annual work programme and Area Action Plan and the spending of its funds within these terms of reference

- To make comments on strategic development matters affecting either its own area or the Borough as a whole;

- To make representations in the form of reports, 'action requests' or recommendations to the Cabinet or the Council as the case may be on council services, except for development management and licensing, relating to its Area:

- To take executive function decisions in relation to any works or services to be provided in its Area out of its funding

- To provide 'area intelligence' to the Cabinet and relevant heads of services

- To assist with policy development on matters pertinent to its area, including the power to make recommendations to the Cabinet or Council on policy changes.

- To develop an Area Action Plan to deliver locally determined priorities

- To respond to any other specific matter referred to it by the Cabinet, the council or a senior council officer.

Appendix III

POSSIBLE COSTS OF ESTABLISHING AREA COMMITTEES

Assuming there would be three area committees meeting four times a year, estimated costs of establishing area committees would be along the lines of the following illustration.

Note there are no senior and other officer costs included over and above those for Democratic Services and a secretariat-type support.

The table is offered purely as an illustration of the types of costs involved. A More detailed analysis would be required to establish the true costs involved.

Item	Cost (£)
Venue hire - @ £150 x 4 meetings per year x 3 area committees	1,800.00
* Basic staff costs - @ £96.20 per day x 4 meetings per year plus preparatory and follow-up work x 3 committees	1,154.40
** Advanced staff costs - @ 155.40 per day x 4 meetings per year plus preparatory and follow-up work x 3 committees	1,864.80
*** Chairman's Special Responsibility Allowance @ 1930.98 x 3 chairmen	5,792.94
Total	**10,612.14**

* This essentially is the support provided by Democratic Services to prepare and publish agendas and reports and take minutes of meetings, book venues and invite speakers etc. and any general follow-up work

** This is a very rudimentary estimate of the type of higher-level officer support needed to provide a secretariat-type function to the committees – work planning; action-chasing; research; report writing etc.

*** Based on Special Responsibility Allowance for Licensing and Audit Committee Chairmen (i.e. 10% of the Leader's entitlement) – n.b. No current provision in Members Scheme of Allowances to pay a Special Responsibility Allowance for area committee chairmen.

Appendix IV

Parish and Town Councils in each area (by Parliamentary constituency)

Constituency	Borough Wards (no. of members)	Parishes (no. of members)
Faversham and Mid Kent	Abbey (2)	Faversham Town Council (14) – Abbey Ward
	Boughton and Courtenay (2)	Boughton-under-Blean Parish Council (11)
		Dunkirk Parish Council (7)
		Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council (7)
		Hernhill Parish Council (7)
		Selling Parish Council (7)
		Sheldwich, Badlesmere and Leaveland Parish Council (9) – Shelwich Ward
	East Downs (1)	Doddington Parish Council (7)
		Eastling Parish Council (5)
		Newnham Parish Council (7)
		Ospringe Parish Council (9)
		Sheldwich, Badlesmere and Leaveland Parish Council (9) – Badlesmere Ward

Constituency	Borough Wards (no. of members)	Parishes (no. of members)
		Sheldwich, Badlesmere and Leaveland Parish Council (9) – Leaveland Ward
		Stalisfield Parish Council (5)
		Throwley Parish Council (7)
	Priory (1)	Faversham Town Council (14) – Priory Ward
	St Ann's (2)	Faversham Town Council (14) – St Ann's Ward
	Watling (2)	Faversham Town Council (14) – Watling Ward
Sittingbourne and Sheppey	Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow (2)	Bobbing Parish Council (9) – Bobbing Ward
		Iwade Parish Council (11)
		Lower Halstow Parish Council (7)
	Borden and Grove Park (2)	Bobbing Parish Council (9) – Grove Park Ward
		Borden Parish Council (13)
	Chalkwell (1)	-
	Harlip, Newington and Upchurch (2)	Hartlip Parish Council (7)
		Newington Parish Council (11)
		Upchurch Parish Council (9)

Constituency	Borough Wards (no. of members)	Parishes (no. of members)
	Homewood (2)	-
	Kemsley (2)	-
	Milton Regis (2)	-
	Murston (2)	-
	Roman (2)	-
	Teynham and Lynsted (2)	Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council (9)
		Norton, Buckland and Stone Parish Council (5)
		Oare Parish Council (7)
		Teynham Parish Council (11)
		Tonge Parish Council (5)
	The Meads (1)	Bobbing Parish Council (9) - The Meads Ward
	West Downs (1)	Bapchild Parish Council (7)
		Bredgar Parish Council (7)
		Milstead Parish Council (5)
		Rodmersham Parish Council (7)

Constituency	Borough Wards (no. of members)	Parishes (no. of members)
		Tunstall Parish Council (7) – Tunstall Rural Ward
	Woodstock (2)	Tunstall Parish Council (7) – Tunstall Urban Ward
	Minster Cliffs (3)	Minster-on-Sea Parish Council (11) – Minster North Ward
	Queenborough and Halfway (3)	Queenborough Town Council (11)
	Sheerness (3)	Sheerness Town Council (9)
	Sheppey Central (3)	Minister-on-Sea Parish Council (11) – Minister South Ward
	Sheppey East (2)	Eastchurch Parish Council (7)
		Leysdown Parish Council (7)
		Minister-on-Sea Parish Council (11) – Minster East Ward
		Warden Parish Council (7)