

Western Area Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	Tuesday 1 September 2020
Report Title	Purpose and role of Area Committees in Swale
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	David Clifford, Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Bob Pullen, Policy and Performance Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the committee's terms of reference and membership. 2. To agree to consider further how the committee can discharge its functions.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report explains the purpose of area committees in Swale and describes what functions the Western Area Committee has in order that it can consider how it will discharge those functions.

2 Background

- 2.1 One of the objectives of the administration which was formed at Swale Borough Council following the 2019 local elections was to diffuse power among members and improve public engagement in decision-making. Over the past year the administration has been putting in place arrangements to establish area committees in Swale in order to help meet this objective.
- 2.2 Membership includes all ward Members in the area and the committees' boundaries are aligned with those of the wards it covers (see Appendix I). Substitute members are not permitted on area committees and only those councillors who are members of Swale Borough Council are able to take decisions.
- 2.3 However, public attendance and participation in the area committees is expected to be an important feature of them. With this in mind, the council have incorporated provisions in the Constitution for there to be a 20-minute session for members of the public to ask relevant questions and make relevant comments to the committee. Questions will be for the chair to answer, but the chair will have discretion to invite other Members to contribute. Furthermore, the chair also has

discretion to extend the 20-minute session which is a provision which is not available to chairs of any other type of committee the council operates.

- 2.4 It is envisaged that part of this session will be given over to suggestions for members of the public or local organisations, including parish and town councils, to propose items for future agendas for consideration by the committees.
- 2.5 The purpose of the area committees is to enhance the quality of life and of council services in the relevant area and to bring local insight to bear in council decision-making. In common with all four area committees across Swale, the Western Area Committee's specific terms of reference are to:
- develop a work programme to enhance core services within the area and take a report to council on an annual basis to provide an update on progress;
 - agree spending decisions in relation to specific funding allocated to members of the area committee;
 - provide area intelligence to the cabinet and heads of service, and assist with policy development on relevant matters; and
 - make recommendations to cabinet on issues in the committee's area and respond to any other specific matter referred to it by cabinet, the council or a senior council officer.
- 2.6 With regard to point 2 of the terms of reference, each Member will receive an identical amount of specific funding, established in each annual council budget, to be allocated to projects in consultation and agreement with the area committee at large. This will be £4k each and £40k in total as there are ten Members representing the six wards covered by the area committee.
- 2.7 Members may make proposals for allocating any part of the amount remaining to them at any meeting of the committee, and the committee's agreement will be decided by a simple majority of Members present. The pooling of individual Members' amounts is permissible.
- 2.8 Any amount for which an allocation has not been agreed by the area committee by the end of the financial year (i.e. by 31 March 2021), will be forfeited, and no rollovers will be permitted. Any funding allocation agreed by the committee but unspent by the end of each electoral cycle (i.e. by May 2023) will also be forfeited.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 It is important that given the investment in time and resources to establish area committees everything is done to make them as effective as possible.
- 3.2 Cabinet have undertaken to ensure area committees are consulted on key issues that affect their areas and that they will listen and respond to feedback and intelligence provided by the committees.
- 3.3 The committees are duty bound by their terms of reference to report to council on an annual basis and one mechanism enabling them to do that would be to develop a work programme and measure what progress has been made.
- 3.4 It is recognised that each area committee could have a different focus and it may be large, strategic issues that pre-occupy an area or more local schemes which have a big impact on local people or communities.
- 3.5 It will be for each committee to decide and set its own work programme and Appendix II lists some of the issues the area committees in local authorities in other parts of the country focus on. The committee might want to consider whether these or similar issues are ones they want to focus on.

Western Area Committee

Membership = 10 Quorum = 3	
Meeting dates (all 7pm start):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tuesday 1 September 2020 - Tuesday 1 December 2020 - Tuesday 2 March 2021 	
Ward	Member
Bobbing, Iwade and Lower Halstow	Roger Clark
	Corrie Woodford
Borden and Grove Park	Mike Baldock
	Nicholas Hampshire
Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch	Alan Horton
	Richard Palmer
The Meads	James Hunt
Woodstock	Paul Stephen
	Sarah Stephen
West Downs	Monique Bonney

Examples of matters which council area committees in other parts of England are considering

- Public open space, allotments, and other recreation or leisure facilities;
- Tourism facilities;
- Heritage and conservation issues;
- Facilities for local children, young people, the elderly and disadvantaged members of the community;
- Police community support officers, neighbourhood policing teams and community safety;
- Crime & grime and other enforcement operations;
- Waste collection services;
- Energy conservation schemes;
- Street cleansing and lighting;
- Road safety;
- Public transport and car parking;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Area based regeneration schemes and town & district centre projects;
- Area action plans;
- Community assets;
- Local community improvement schemes;
- Local community development issues;
- Strategies for community engagement, consultation and involvement exercises on matters of local community interest in its area.