

<b>STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
<b>10 NOVEMBER 2010</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Head of Neighbourhoods**

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### **NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS PROGRESS REPORT**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

To provide the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress and review of Neighbourhood Councils so far in order that the Committee can provide scrutiny of and input into their continuing development.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee are asked to scrutinise the progress of the Neighbourhood Councils and the proposals for a way forward.

#### **3. LINKS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Neighbourhood Councils are contributing to the empowerment and citizenship agenda, which underpins the Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

Interim measures were implemented after a six month review of Neighbourhood Councils. These included steps to make the meetings less formal. Measures were introduced to ensure Neighbourhood Councils discuss subjects which have a wider appeal to the community as a whole and which will encourage participation. Neighbourhood Councils have now been in operation for a year and a review of the current framework is underway.

The progress across the 7 councils has been mixed but there are some key observations emerging that are common to all:

- The current structure is starting to be embedded and recognised and there is some acknowledgement of the merit of Neighbourhood Councils and their role in the decision making structure
- Neighbourhood Councils have had very active, open and honest discussions on some major issues that affect residents including Site Allocations, Houses in Multiple Occupation, the Local Transport Plan, the new hospital, anti social behaviour, the use of community facilities in their relevant area and the community action planning process
- Members have been able to demonstrate public accountability in their role as community leaders in representing the views of their residents. An example of this is Peterborough North Area Committee who had a robust discussion about dog control orders. This was an issue raised by an elected Member on behalf of residents. After the discussion elected Members voted in a public forum to express their views. This vote has directly influenced the work of officers. As another example, Neighbourhood Councils for the South have made budget decisions for their capital spend of £25k. This spend was influenced by residents, who had the opportunity to express their views, before elected Members voted in a public forum on suggestions

- The small size of Neighbourhood Council areas allows them to be really local, focussing on very specific Neighbourhood issues. The exception to this is Rural North which is geographically large and encompasses all villages in the North of the City. These often have very different needs, aspirations, issues and plans to each other
- Informal seating, with Members seated within the Community, has proved popular with the majority of Members and attendees. Feedback from the community has included a further opportunity to talk to Members informally and discuss subjects that they would not have previously had the opportunity to discuss
- Several departments have been using Neighbourhood Councils as a consultative body, advertising that they will be displaying information and asking opinions, immediately before the start of the Neighbourhood Council meetings. This has proved popular with residents, Members and officers.

There are, however a number of key issues that are emerging highlighted by Members, partners and residents, but also as part of the review process and these are set out below.

## 5. KEY ISSUES

- (i) There are currently 28 Neighbourhood Council meetings each year, all requiring a substantial amount of preparation, officer and Member input. There have been criticisms of the costs involved and the amount of resource that is necessary for each one, and this is especially relevant in the context of current budget proposals. This is in addition to an already full democratic calendar and Member, officer and partner involvement in a wealth of external meetings. Furthermore, the complex issues that are often raised at meetings are often not brought to a satisfactory conclusion before the next meeting is scheduled with insufficient time for proper problem solving and the implementation of a sustainable solution.
- (ii) Neighbourhood Councils are still not completely aligned to Neighbourhood Panel boundaries and their relationship to each other requires clarification. Feedback from Members has highlighted the need for affirmation of the roles and responsibilities they should play within Neighbourhood Panels and Councils.
- (iii) There remains a significant amount of tension between Parish Councils and the Rural North Neighbourhood Council. Parishes are accepting of the Neighbourhood Council concept and welcome decision making at a local level. However, they would like to see an alternative structure for the rural areas of Peterborough.
- (iv) Resident attendance at Neighbourhood Councils is still patchy. This could be related to a lack of understanding as to the purpose of Neighbourhood Councils or a belief in whether they can truly influence decision making through them. Alternatively, communication with residents could be a barrier. Advertising meetings and appropriate marketing is still highlighted by residents as a problem.
- (v) The existing Neighbourhood Council capital budget of £25k is a very small amount of money to make a tangible difference to an area. Although welcomed by all seven Councils as an opportunity to make a contribution towards projects which fulfil an identified priority within an area, it has frustrated some Members, residents and community groups.
- (vi) A further frustration has been a lack of decision making during the first year. Very few delegated responsibility decisions have been made and some Members have requested further publicity on the delegated responsibilities of Neighbourhood Councils.
- (vii) Neighbourhood Councils need to have ownership of the Community Action Plans for their area. This will allow and encourage real accountability for their content.

## **Moving Forward and Addressing the Issues**

In recognising these issues, it is now essential that Neighbourhood Councils become more efficient with regard to delivery arrangements and cost, and that meaningful decision making takes place.

### **5.1 Frequency of meetings and roles and responsibilities**

As part of the development of the new Medium Term Financial Plan it is proposed that the number of Neighbourhood Council meetings is reduced to 14 overall instead of the current 28. This would reduce costs but would also allow for proper planning, problem solving and progress to be made on the strategic issues affecting an area. They would continue to operate across the 7 existing areas and would take place in local community venues, but there would be absolute clarity about the level and type of decision making delegated to the Councils. This is to ensure that neighbourhood councils operate within a streamlined structure which is understood by all parties.

To achieve this there has been a review of the overall current complex meeting structures that operate within neighbourhoods to clarify roles and responsibilities of each and thus identify any duplications and/or opportunities for further alignment.

It is recognised that to strengthen local delivery and embed a positive approach towards how and by whom services are delivered, it would be essential to ensure that there are supportive engagement activities which surround the Neighbourhood Council structure. This would provide a strong infrastructure within each neighbourhood, reinforce opportunities for continued improvement and provide a formally recognised process to deal with issues head on.

In the Rural North area there is a commitment to evolve the current Neighbourhood Council structure to better serve rural issues and strengthen the relationship with Parish Councils. There is also a drive to reduce the number of meetings which involve rural Members and Parish Councillors and amalgamate where possible.

### **5.2 Alignment with Neighbourhood Panels and Community Partnerships**

Neighbourhood Managers, part of whose role is to support local engagement and participation, need to lead a process whereby communities are supported to take a more direct role in the future of their own neighbourhood.

This approach would be in line with the spirit of the new national thinking around the 'Big Society' and localism. The relationship between local groups and Peterborough City Council, through the Neighbourhood Management team, will be critical as part of this process. The role of community groups as part of a wider Civil Sector would enable more creative solutions to be found for those seemingly intractable issues and challenges, and, for example, would enable a broader range of investment options to be considered and pursued.

To enable this to happen Neighbourhood Council meetings will continue to be aligned to the frequency of Full Council meetings and those of the Neighbourhood Panels and will operate at a strategic level with elected Ward Members having voting rights.

This is in recognition that the Neighbourhood Panels address the day to day issues raised by the local community. On-the-ground issues will continue to be raised at Neighbourhood Panels and Neighbourhood Delivery Teams will work together to solve these issues. Further engagement, through workshops, publicity and working with partners will be needed to further embed this framework.

With the overall intention of streamlining the relationships between the different operational functions and reducing the number of meetings held in neighbourhoods, community partnerships that serve the overall needs of a self defined neighbourhood will be encouraged. These partnerships will act as a key point of contact for Members and Officers to champion the needs of their area and actively work with service providers to help deliver on activities as identified within the area's Community Action Plan.

### 5.3 Action Planning responsibilities

Community Action Plans will continue to act as the overarching strategic plan for the Neighbourhood Council area, underpinned where available by more detailed Neighbourhood Investment Plans and/or Local Studies to ensure these also remain live documents. In recognition that in rural areas each village is very different there will no longer be one overarching Community Action Plan. Each village will be encouraged and supported to devise its own plan and Parish Councils will have the ownership of these. The responsibility for developing community action plans will transfer to colleagues in the Strategic Planning service in recognition of the importance of these plans in the long term growth and regeneration aspirations for the city.

### 5.4 Financial Responsibility

Although it is proposed that from the next financial year the existing £25k capital budget allocated to Neighbourhood Councils will be removed they will receive money from the Planning Obligations Implementation Scheme (POIS).

A total of 35% of the money received from POIS will be allocated to neighbourhood projects through Neighbourhood Councils and their associated Community Action Plans. Of this amount the money received will be broken down further into allocations for transport and communications, education and learning, community and leisure, emergency services, environment and health and adult social care. The table below shows the breakdown of this.

Infrastructure Type	Neighbourhood 'Pool'	Strategic 'Pool'
Transport & Communication	25%	5%
Community & Leisure	7%	7%
Education & Learning	10%	10%
Emergency Services	18%	
Environment	15%	5%
Health & Adult Social Care		8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>35%</b>

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

It is expected that applying the scrutiny process to the proposals for Neighbourhood Councils will help to improve attendance, make them accessible to all members of the community, and will be an effective vehicle to drive forward community plans.

## 7. CONSULTATION

Feedback has been gathered from a variety of sources in advance of making these proposals.

## 8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is anticipated that Members will scrutinise and discuss the above suggestions and offer further advice.

## 9. NEXT STEPS

Following discussions at the Scrutiny Committee, any comments and recommendations will be taken forward as part of the ongoing development and review of Neighbourhood Councils

**10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

**11. APPENDICES**

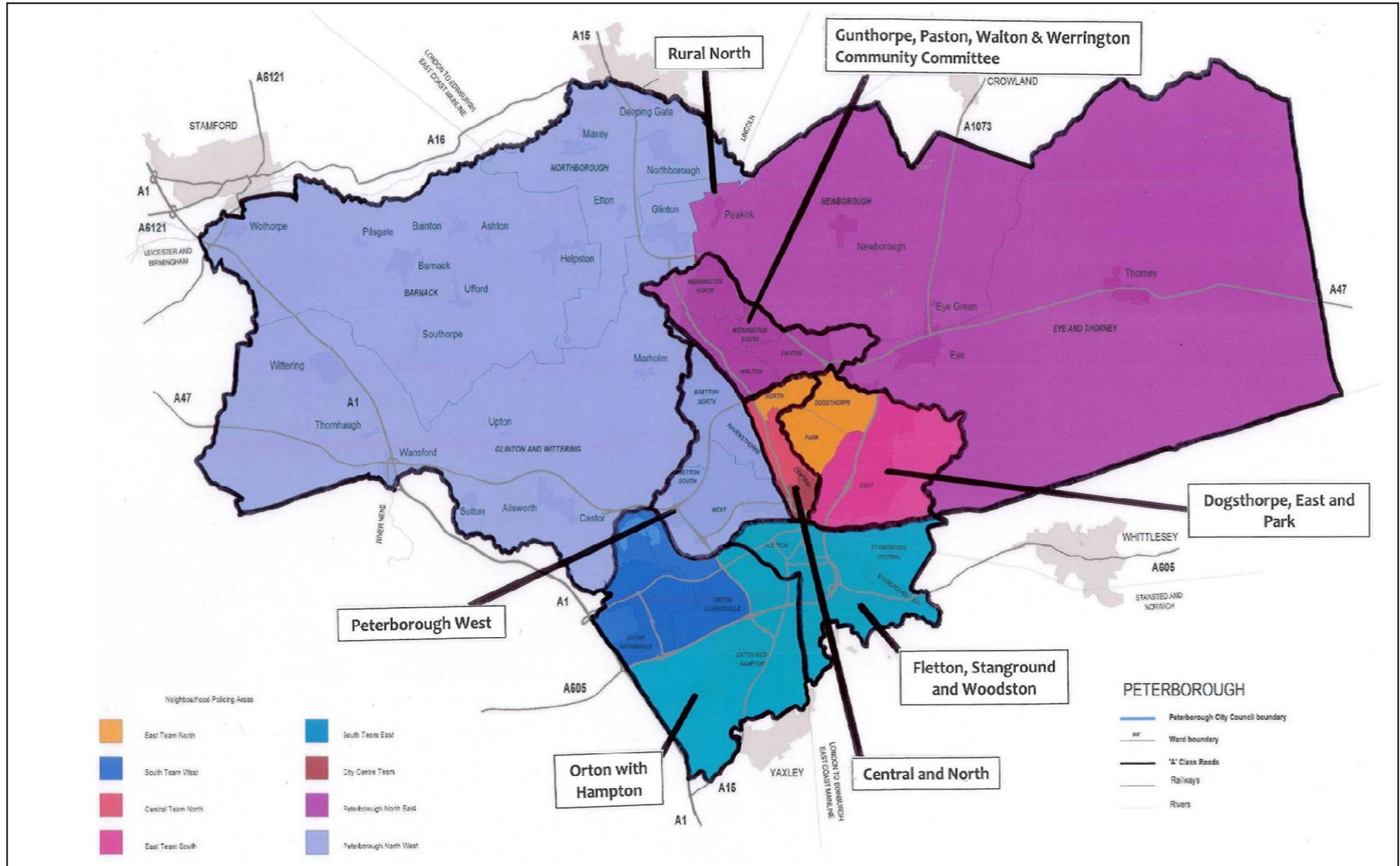
The current geographical arrangements for Neighbourhood Councils are shown at **appendix 1**.

Details of Wards represented at each Neighbourhood Council are shown at **appendix 2**.

Relevant extracts from the Council's Constitution relating to Neighbourhood Councils are included at **appendix 3**.

# Appendix 1: Geographical Arrangements for Neighbourhood Councils

(Please note – Gunthorpe, Paston, Walton & Werrington Community Committee is now called Peterborough North Area Committee)



**Appendix 2: Details of Wards represented at each Neighbourhood Council**

<p><b><u>North and West Neighbourhood Management Area</u></b>  <b>Neighbourhood Manager – Julie Rivett</b>  <b>Neighbourhood Council Chair – Cllr Pat Nash</b></p>	
<b><i>Neighbourhood Council Name</i></b>	<b><i>Wards Covered</i></b>
Rural North	Northborough, Barnack, Glington and Wittering, Newborough, Eye and Thorney
Gunthorpe, Paston, Walton and Werrington Community Committee – now called Peterborough North Area Committee	Werrington North, Werrington South, Paston and Walton
Peterborough West	Bretton North, Bretton South, West and Ravensthorpe
<p><b><u>Central and East Neighbourhood Management Area</u></b>  <b>Neighbourhood Manager – Cate Harding</b>  <b>Neighbourhood Council Chair – Cllr Yvonne Lowndes</b></p>	
<b><i>Neighbourhood Council Name</i></b>	<b><i>Wards Covered</i></b>
Dogsthorpe, East and Park	Dogsthorpe, East and Park
Central and North	Central and North
<p><b><u>South Neighbourhood Management Area</u></b>  <b>Neighbourhood Manager – Lisa Emmanuel</b>  <b>Neighbourhood Council Chair – Cllr Janet Goodwin</b></p>	
<b><i>Neighbourhood Council Name</i></b>	<b><i>Wards Covered</i></b>
Orton With Hampton	Orton with Hampton, Orton Longueville, Orton Waterville
Fletton, Stanground and Woodston	Stanground Central, Stanground East, Fletton

## **Appendix 3: Relevant extracts from the Council's Constitution relating to Neighbourhood Councils**

### *Part 3, Delegations Section 3 - Executive Functions*

#### **3.13 Delegations to Neighbourhood Councils**

- 3.13.1 The Leader retains responsibility for functions delegated and may exercise those functions in person regardless of further delegation.
- 3.13.2 To promote the Council's role as a community leader in its area, giving a 'voice' to the community and fostering good working relationships with the Council's partner organisations, Parish Councils the relevant authorities for Police, Fire, Probation and Magistrates' Court Services, Health and Social Care, Education and Youth services.
- 3.13.3 To assist the Cabinet in taking a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental cultural and social wellbeing of the area.
- 3.13.4 Setting area master plans, with action plans to support their delivery, within the community strategy.
- 3.13.5 Agreeing and monitoring plans for community development and social inclusion.
- 3.13.6 Setting the standards for street cleaning, abandoned vehicles and dog warden service.
- 3.13.7 Agreeing the yearly programme of works under s42 Highways Act 1980.
- 3.13.8 Giving permission for on-street activities or structures under the Highways Act 1980.
- 3.13.9 Designating conservation areas.
- 3.13.10 Setting the standards for strategic management and maintenance of parks, commons, sports grounds, playing fields, open spaces, burial grounds, allotments, public monuments, public toilets, ditches, streams and car parks (except central car parks) – this will include agreeing a yearly programme of works.
- 3.13.11 Naming and numbering streets if there are unresolved objections following consultation
- 3.13.12 Approving projects if it holds the budget for the project or the project is in its area
- 3.13.13 Act as consultees on all Executive and Council proposals that affect the area, particularly capital schemes affecting the area, including modifications to schools.
- 3.13.14 Act as consultees on Planning and Licensing applications in relation to the area, and report views to the relevant Committee.

## Section 4 - Neighbourhood Councils Functions

### 4.1 Functions of the three Neighbourhood Councils

The Council has appointed Neighbourhood Councils, as set out below:

North and West:	3 Neighbourhood Councils
Central and East:	2 Neighbourhood Councils
South:	2 Neighbourhood Councils

The terms of reference apply to all Neighbourhood Councils. The Neighbourhood Councils will undertake the following in respect of the local area, subject to Council policy.

1.	Identify and, as far as it is able to do so within its budget, meet the needs of the community in the local area via consultation with, and involvement of, the community and other appropriate bodies.
2.	Develop Community Master Plans and Action Plans to support their delivery, and monitor their implementation.
3.	Be the primary focus for public involvement and consultation within the area, working closely with other public, private and voluntary agencies, and advising the Executive as appropriate on issues which affect the area.
4.	Carry out any non-Executive functions delegated by the council, and any Executive functions delegated by the Leader, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations set out in Part 3 sections 1 and 3 of the Constitution
5.	Set the standards for, and seek agreement for changes from the Executive to services to meet local needs which are outside the immediate responsibility / budget of the Neighbourhood Council. Includes seeking agreement to revenue and capital expenditure to meet any changes. (If such changes would be contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget, then the matter would be referred to Council by the Executive)
6.	Act as consultees in respect of Planning and Licensing applications relating to the area.
7.	Be consulted on all Executive and Council proposals that affect the area, particularly capital schemes affecting the area, including modifications to schools.
8.	Monitoring local service delivery, considering the outcome of such monitoring and advising the Executive, and the relevant Scrutiny Committee or Commission as appropriate.
9.	Work closely with Scrutiny Committees and Commissions including suggesting items for scrutiny, and if required to become involved in reviews carried out by Scrutiny Committees and Commissions at the request of the Chairs.
10.	Recommend grants to local voluntary organisations and community groups, subject to the approved grant procedures.
11.	Make arrangements for the provision of information about local services and other information to people in the area.
12.	Act as a Community Forum where the Neighbourhood Council and members of the community can discuss areas of concern to them, such issues to include matters which are the direct responsibility of the Council and other issues which are the responsibility of other organisations.

## Section 8 - Neighbourhood Councils Procedure Rules

### 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1 The terms of reference are as set out in Part 3, section 4 of this Constitution
- 1.2 Neighbourhood Councils may recommend to the Executive any proposal to create a Sub-Committee, Panel, Working Party, Board, or similar body to report to the Neighbourhood Council.

### 2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 All members who are elected to the wards which form part of a Neighbourhood Council will be members of that Neighbourhood Council.
- 2.2 The Neighbourhood Councils are currently made up of the following wards:

2.2.1	Central and East -	C&E1: Central and North C&E2: Park, Dogsthorpe, East
2.2.2	South -	S1 : Stanground East and Fletton S2: Orton with Hampton, Orton Longueville, Orton Waterville
2.2.3	North and West -	N&W1 : Northborough, Barnack, Glinton and Wittering, Newborough Eye and Thorney N&W2: Werrington North, Werrington South, Paston and Walton N&W3 : Bretton North, Bretton South, West and Ravensthorpe

### 3. CALL-IN

- 3.1 Any decision may be called in by the most relevant Scrutiny Committee or Commission with call-in powers and considered by the relevant committee or a sub committee set up for that specific purpose.

### 4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 If a Scrutiny Committee/Commission is scrutinising specific decisions or proposals in relation to the business of an Neighbourhood Council of which the Councillor concerned is a member, then the Councillor may not speak or vote and must withdraw from the Scrutiny Committee / Commission meeting unless a dispensation is given by the Standards Committee.
- 4.2 Where a Scrutiny Committee / Commission is reviewing policy generally, a Member must declare his / her interest as a member of any relevant Neighbourhood Council, before the relevant agenda item is reached, but need not withdraw.

## **5. CO-OPTEEES**

- 5.1 Neighbourhood Councils shall be entitled to co-opt, as non-voting members, external representatives, or otherwise invite participation from non-members where this is relevant to their work.
- 5.2 Each Neighbourhood Council will determine at its first meeting which local partners it wishes to issue a standing invitation to its meetings, and this will be reviewed regularly (at least annually). This is likely to include Parish Councils, representatives of local schools, and other interested local groups to be determined by each Neighbourhood Council.

## **6. MEETINGS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS**

- 6.1 Each Neighbourhood Council shall hold four Ordinary meetings in each Municipal year. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time, either by the Chair, any three members of the Neighbourhood Council, or the proper officer, if considered appropriate.
- 6.2 Meetings will generally be held in the week and if there is any disagreement about timing between the Chairman and other Members of the Council, the meeting will start at 7.00 p.m.
- 6.3 Neighbourhood Councils will normally meet in their areas, wherever possible in places accessible to everyone. However, they may meet in the Town Hall to deal with unfinished business from a previous meeting or to deal with business that is private because it is exempt or confidential.
- 6.4 After two hours, the Chairman will finish the item the Committee is on and decide whether to continue with the rest of the business or defer it to a future meeting.
- 6.5 Each agenda will include an open session during which any member of the public and any co-opted member can raise anything that affects the area.
- 6.6 Points raised in an address or in the open session can:
  - Be replied to at the meeting
  - Be discussed at the meeting
  - Be referred elsewhere
- 6.7 The Chair can decide that a point raised will be discussed at a meeting. No action can be taken until a report has been sent to a future meeting, but the Neighbourhood Council can:
  - Form an opinion
  - Express its opinion to another Council body or outside organisation
  - Ask for a report to a future meeting

## **7. AREA FORUM**

- 7.1 In addition to the four Ordinary meetings, each area shall hold an Area Forum once a year, the subject of which will be determined by the Chairman in consultation with the relevant Neighbourhood Councils.

- 7.2 Area Forum meetings will normally be held in the second half of the municipal year, in a venue suitable for public participation.

#### **8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- 8.1 Ordinary meetings shall generally take place in public, and will be well publicised in advance.
- 8.2 At Ordinary meetings members of the public have the right to speak at any time, with the permission of the Chairman.
- 8.3 Neighbourhood Councils will comply with the Access to Information Rules set out in Part 4, Section 5 of the Constitution.

#### **9. QUORUM**

- 9.1 The quorum for an Neighbourhood Council meeting shall be at least 25% of voting members, to be not less than three.

#### **10. VOTING**

- 10.1 The City Councillor members of a Neighbourhood Council can vote. If a vote is tied, the Chairman has a casting vote.

#### **11. CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

- 11.1 The Chairman for each area will be appointed by Council each Municipal year. The Chairman will be responsible for all Neighbourhood Councils in the area, that is, there will be one Chairman for North and West, one Chairman for Central and East, and one Chairman for South.
- 11.2 The Vice Chairman will be appointed from the members appointed to the Neighbourhood Councils, and there will be one Vice Chairman appointed for each of the 7 Neighbourhood Councils.

#### **12. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 12.1 The Councils will be responsible for setting their own work programmes, in consultation with officers in Neighbourhood Management and Democratic Services teams.

#### **13. AGENDA ITEMS**

- 13.1 It must be made clear on the agenda for the meeting whether the decisions required relate to Executive functions or not.
- 13.2 Any member can submit an item of business to be included on the agenda of any Neighbourhood Council. The item will be included as long as the Member gives written notice to the Chief Executive by midday seven working days before the meeting (not including the day of the meeting).

13.3 Any resident or organisation that provides services to the area can put an item on the agenda if it is within the committee's terms of reference and they make the request in writing to Democratic Services at least ten working days before the meeting.

**14. MISCELLANEOUS**

14.1 If there is any gap in procedures, the appropriate action shall be entirely within the discretion of the Chairman.

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