

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 9
19 JANUARY 2011	Public Report

Report of the Solicitor to the Council

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL SCRUTINY REVIEW

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider and agree the Terms of Reference and membership of the Task and Finish Group which has been formed at the request of the Committee at its meeting on 10 November 2010 to undertake a review of Neighbourhood Councils.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee approves:

- I. The Terms of Reference for the Review.
- II. The membership of the Task and Finish Group

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 10 November 2010 and after receiving a report on the progress of Neighbourhood Councils the Committee agreed:
- i. To establish a task and finish group to review the processes and principles of the Neighbourhood Councils and to come forward with recommendations for their continued development.
 - ii. That the review will examine all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils, including their funding, delegated responsibilities and logistical arrangements. The review will also look at how the meetings can be developed to meet the expectations of local residents.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Due to the tight timescales involved in making recommendations with regards to the funding arrangements of Neighbourhood Councils the proposed Task and Finish Group has already been required to meet to discuss a number of issues.

4.2 Terms of Reference

At their first meeting the Group considered their terms of reference and it is proposed that the Terms of Reference for the review are:

To review the process and principles of Neighbourhood Councils, taking learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce recommendations for their continued development. The review is to include:

1. The overarching terms of reference for Neighbourhood Councils as set out in the Constitution

2. The range of responsibilities and decision-making powers delegated to Neighbourhood Councils as set out in the Constitution
3. The relationship between Neighbourhood Councils and other Council forums, committees and meetings
4. The relationship between Neighbourhood Councils and other neighbourhood or community focussed forums (e.g. Neighbourhood Panels), to ensure minimum duplication and maximum delivery
5. The process of engaging with Councillors outside the formal Neighbourhood Council meeting to progress decisions made and actions agreed during the meeting
6. The revenue and capital funding delegated to Neighbourhood Councils
7. The process for making decisions on allocating delegated finance, including Section 106 funds
8. The logistical arrangements that support Neighbourhood Councils, including meeting venues, accessibility, times, dates, frequency, presentation including sound equipment, refreshments, seating arrangements and the associated costs.
9. The methods used to promote Neighbourhood Council meetings to the public and partners to ensure maximum and appropriate levels of attendance and public participation
10. The processes used to develop the agendas, including reviewing how best to ensure agendas are relevant, meaningful and interesting and how best to involve the public in the debates
11. The process of reviewing previous actions and how those results are presented to the public
12. The process for distributing the agenda packs before, and the minutes after, each Neighbourhood Council meeting

4.3 **Membership**

As part of the process of setting up the task and finish group the Scrutiny Officer wrote to all the Group Secretaries to request nominations for membership. The nominations put forward were:

Councillor Todd
Councillor Burton
Councillor Simons
Councillor JR Fox
Councillor Khan
Councillor Sandford
Councillor Goldspink

It is therefore proposed that these nominations are confirmed as the membership of the Task and Finish Group.

Whilst considering the membership of the Group, the Committee considered two nominations for co-opted members. Following discussion the group decided that these two people would be better placed as key witnesses and would be invited for interview as part of the evidence gathering process.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proposed review has been discussed and agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 10 November 2010.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The initial report from the Group on the funding issues around Neighbourhood Councils will be considered later on tonight's agenda. A further report will be brought to the Committee on 9 March 2011.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 7.1 None

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