

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
21 MARCH 2011	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Hiller: Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning	
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NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL REVIEW – PART TWO

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee	Deadline date : 13 April 2011
<p>Cabinet is asked to <u>endorse</u> the following recommendations prior to consideration by Annual Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To change the name of Neighbourhood Councils to Area Committees. 2. Adopt the following as the vision statement for Area Committees: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">“Area Committees will deliver improvements for the local area by identifying, overseeing, monitoring and driving actions to support all issues relevant to the area, including service delivery, service improvements, and area developments”</p> 3. Amend the relevant Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution to reflect these recommendations, and to ensure that Area Committees are supported by similar procedures that support other Council committees. 4. Replace the existing terms of reference for Neighbourhood Councils with the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Area Committees are established in Peterborough in accordance with the provisions set out in Local Government Act 2000 (ii) Area Committees will require the proactive support of all elected Councillors, officers, and partner organisations to ensure their full and positive success <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Area Committees should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Make decisions within the remit of their terms of reference and their formally delegated responsibilities, or make recommendations to the Executive as appropriate on issues which affect the area (iv) Be the committee where members of the Area Committee and members of the community can discuss issues of concern or interest, including those that are not the direct responsibility of the Council as well as those that are (v) Set the standards for services to meet local needs which are outside the immediate responsibility or budget of the Area Committee, and seek agreement for any changes from the Executive 	

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- (vi) Be the primary focus for public involvement and consultation within the area, working closely with other public, private and voluntary agencies, and advising and/or making recommendations that arise to the Executive as appropriate on issues which affect the area
 - (vii) Develop community action plans, and monitor their implementation, to ensure the promotion of economic, environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of the area, that service delivery improvements are made and that better outcomes are achieved
 - (viii) 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
 - (ix) Be directly responsible for any delegated funding identified by the Council and invest that money in ways that support the priorities identified through the community planning process
5. That for the Municipal Year commencing May 2011, replace the existing Delegations to Neighbourhood Councils with those set out below. Keep this under review during that year, with a view to expanding the delegations from the start of the Municipal Year commencing May 2012:
- (i) The Leader retains responsibility for functions delegated and may exercise those functions in person, regardless of further delegation. Further, the Area Committees must act with due regard to all other Council policies and procedures
 - (ii) To promote the Council's role as a community leader in its area, giving a meaningful voice to the community and fostering good and productive working relationships with the Council's partner organisations, including Parish Councils, Police, Fire, Probation, criminal justice agencies, health and social care agencies, education agencies, young peoples' services, community associations, residents associations and voluntary sector agencies
 - (iii) To take a leading role in promoting the economic, environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of the area, and develop community action plans to achieve this that improve service delivery and achieve better outcomes
 - (iv) To set the standards for all former City Services operations now contracted to Enterprise to ensure effective delivery of all services, including making decisions on the maximum amount of any delegated budgets allowable within the terms of the contract to be deployed on local priorities (*to be confirmed subject to details of the contract*)
 - (v) To agree the annual programme of works contained within the Highways Capital Programme for 2012/13 onwards
 - (vi) To act as consultees on all major or significant Executive and Council proposals that affect the area, including those affecting both capital and revenue spend
 - (vii) To act as consultees in respect of Major Planning applications relevant to the area, and report views to the relevant Committee
 - (viii) To carry out any actions that the Executive authorises in addition to those set out above, until such time as that authorisation is revoked

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S CONTINUED

6. Deliver the recommendations set out in the report from the sub-group of the Neighbourhood Council Task and Finish Group which has focussed on rural/parish issues, specifically:
- (i) create a new committee to replace the Rural North Neighbourhood Council, that comprises rural Ward Councillors and one co-opted representative from each of the 23 rural Parish Councils
 - (ii) appoint a rural Ward Councillor as the Chair of this committee
 - (iii) hold all meetings at a rural location within any of the 23 rural Parish Council areas
 - (iv) decisions relating to non-financial matters or those that are not formally delegated responsibilities will be debated by all members of the committee, with all members having a single vote each
 - (v) matters relating to financial or delegated responsibilities will be decided solely by elected City Councillors
7. Create a single, seamless approach to neighbourhood engagement by creating a structure which enables the following to be delivered in each Area Committee area during the same session:
- Ward Forum: a ward-specific informal forum where ward councillors can engage with their constituents and discuss informal issues or issues which may require escalation to the Area Committee. During these forums, key officer representation should also be available, including from the Neighbourhood Management team, Trading Standards, Community Safety, Police, and Enterprise
 - Neighbourhood Panel: formally Police-led but now partner-wide meetings during which three local priorities are identified for resolution
 - Area Committee: re-launched former Neighbourhood Council meetings, focussing on more strategic or impactful issues affecting the area
- For example, the Ward Forums may run from 6pm until 6.50pm, and the Area Committee meeting may run from 7pm until 9.00pm with the first 30 minutes given over to the business of the Neighbourhood Panel
8. Ensure the broader neighbourhood management framework is in place and is able to respond to the opportunities provided in the Localism Bill and other relevant emerging legislation. Further, ensure that monthly Neighbourhood Management Delivery Team meetings are in place for all Area Committee areas, that there is full commitment from all councillors, and that the role of community partnership organisations is firmly established.
9. Organise a minimum of two Area Committee locality 'tours' per annum, during which *ALL* members of the Committee, the nominated CMT member, key PCC officers, key officers from partner organisations, key community leaders/representatives and the local media explore the area in more depth focussing on particular problems, hotspots and successes.

Cabinet is asked to approve the following recommendations:

10. Agree to the creation of a job description for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the Area Committee that reflects the changes of emphasis and focus set out in these recommendations, and the role these posts will play in support of the broader neighbourhood management structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

11. Agree to the creation of a lead officer role within the Neighbourhoods division to co-ordinate and facilitate the entire Neighbourhood Management meeting and engagement structure, including:
 - Developing, co-ordinating and monitoring delivery of action plans at Area Committee, Neighbourhood Panel, Ward Forums, and locality tour levels, holding Members, officers and partners to account as necessary
 - Liaising with key PCC departments, notably Democratic Services and Communications, to ensure all required actions are delivered
 - Arranging agenda setting and planning meetings for Area Committees in accordance with the Constitution
 - All logistical arrangements for Area Committees, Neighbourhood Panels, Ward Forums, Neighbourhood Management Delivery Team meetings and any other related forums, including venues, refreshments, access, transport etc
 - Liaising with Council departments and partners regarding information to be made available at each meeting (e.g. literature or a staffed information stand)
 - Managing the agenda plan for each Area Committee containing items for future discussion
 - Developing, managing and co-ordinating a full contacts database of residents, community groups, officers and partners to ensure maximum awareness of all relevant meetings and opportunities for engagement
12. Agree that alongside formal minutes from the Area Committee, comprehensive action plans should be created from (i) every Ward Forum and (ii) every Area Committee meeting, setting out clearly what actions have been agreed, and naming a lead officer (with the consent of the officer named) and a lead councillor jointly responsible for ensuring the action is achieved.
13. Agree to formalise the seating arrangements at Area Committee meetings so that all Members sit at the front of the audience in a horseshoe arrangement, making it clear who has voting rights, how those rights are used, and who is not in attendance
14. Agree to identify a different member of the Corporate Management Team to act as champion and advocate for each of the seven Area Committees, and to ensure that the principles of Area Committees are given the appropriate status amongst all officers.
15. Agree to develop a single media and communications strategy, supported by an action plan, which proactively promotes Area Committees and Ward Forums and their achievements in a timely manner.
 - (a) To help achieve this assign an officer within the Communications team to have responsibility for coordinating publicity and marketing for Area Committees and Ward Forums
 - (b) Produce a publicity 'pack' of template materials and formats that promote Area Committees, including 'soft' formats (via the use of the web, social networking etc) and 'hard' formats (posters, leaflets etc)
16. Agree to be creative and flexible with the logistical arrangements for neighbourhood engagement activities set out in recommendation 7, providing they follow the Access to Information rules. For example, vary the start and end times of the meetings to ensure engagement with different residents, and ensure venues have enough space and capacity to cope with the requirements of both formal and informal forums during the same session

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

17. Agree that officers should explore transport initiatives as and where appropriate for each of the Area Committee meetings to support attendance from residents
18. Agree that the recommendations, when agreed, form part of an overall implementation plan for Neighbourhood Councils alongside the recommendations that emerge from stage one of the review. This implementation plan should be overseen by the cross-party working group formed from the task and finish group, and become a standing item at all Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meetings, with regular updates also provided to Cabinet and Group Representatives
19. Agree to re-brand and have a major re-launch of Neighbourhood Councils as Area Committees. This should include raising awareness to all councillors, PCC officers, external partners, and residents to actively promote their purpose including the vision set out in recommendation 2 along with the new delegations and terms of reference

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following a meeting of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 9 March 2011.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of a review of Neighbourhood Councils which has been undertaken by the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The review has been undertaken in two parts, the outcome of the first part was presented to Cabinet on 7 February 2011. The outcome of the second part is presented in this report. Cabinet are asked to consider the conclusions and agree the recommendations of Part Two of the review.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.5 'To review and recommend to Council changes to the Council's Constitution, protocols and procedure rules'.

3. **TIMESCALE** (If this is not a Major Policy item, answer **NO** and delete second line of boxes).

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO
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4. REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS – PART TWO

- 4.1 Neighbourhood Councils have now been in operation for over a year and the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee requested that a report on their progress be presented to them at their meeting on 10 November 2010. After receiving this report and noting that going forward the proposal was to remove the £25,000 dedicated funding and reduce the meetings to twice a year it was agreed that there should be a review of the process and principles of Neighbourhood Councils. The Committee agreed that there was a need to take learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce recommendations for their continued development. The review would:

- Review the processes and principles of Neighbourhood Councils and come forward with recommendations for their continued development

- Examine all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils, including their funding, delegated responsibilities and logistical arrangements
 - Examine how the meetings can be developed to meet the expectations of local residents
- 4.2 To ensure all aspects of Neighbourhood Councils were taken into account Terms of Reference were put in place and can be found in the attached report at Annex 1.
- 4.3 Part Two of the review has considered the following aspects of Neighbourhood Councils
1. **Decision Making Powers and responsibilities** delegated to Neighbourhood Councils
 2. **Relationships** with other committees, panels, groups, forums etc, both internal and external
 3. **Engagement** with the public, officers, press, Councillors etc, both internal and external

The conclusions and recommendations can be found in the attached report at Annex 1.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation undertaken is detailed in the report at Annex 1.

5. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 5.1 That Cabinet endorses recommendations 1 to 9 prior to consideration by Annual Council, and supports and agrees to recommendations 10 to 19 put forward from Part Two of the review of Neighbourhood Councils.
- 5.2 A full and detailed implementation plan, as referred to in recommendation 18, will be developed which will ensure that all financial and procedural issues are considered prior to the implementation of any recommendations. This implementation plan, coupled with the ongoing work of the review group, will take into consideration the changes the Council will need to make in the way it operates as a result of some of the recommendations, and will work closely with councillors, officers and external partners to support those changes where agreed in a sympathetic and planned manner.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 This report has come to Cabinet following a request from the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee to conduct a review of Neighbourhood Councils. The review has taken into account the learning and experience from the first year of operations, in order to produce the recommendations for their continued development.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Option 1. Not to agree to the recommendations. The Committee do not recommend this as they consider it to be detrimental to the ongoing improvement and development of Neighbourhood Councils.
- 7.2 Option 2. Develop alternative recommendations. The Committee do not recommend this as they consider that the Task and Finish Group have conducted an in depth and objective review and therefore the recommendations put forward are considered to be the most effective way of improving the provision of Neighbourhood Councils.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 8.1 Some of the recommendations in the report at Annex 1, if agreed, will have a direct impact on council budgets. For example, the recommendation to appoint a lead officer to support Neighbourhood Councils and the accompanying neighbourhood management framework is an additional cost to the authority. Any and all costs from both stages of the review will be identified and considered as part of the detailed implementation plan and ways to reduce the impact of any increased costs will be identified wherever possible.

Legal

- 8.2 Some of the recommendations in the report at Annex 1, if agreed, will require changes to the Council's constitution. The ways in which the Neighbourhood Councils will be taken forward, if agreed, will also require the council to consider the impacts on the way it operates – for example, levels of delegated authority, working more closely with partners, community action planning etc.

Environment

- 8.3 Many of the recommendations support the council's environmental agenda. For example, combining meetings to be held on the same evening reduces travel across Peterborough. Venues for meetings will always need to be on or close to bus routes to encourage attendance, and the recommendation to explore transport initiatives to enable attendance will be taken forward in close partnership with the council's sustainable travel team.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

Minutes of Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny meetings held on 10 November 2010, 19 January 2011 and 9 March 2011.

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