

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**PUBLIC REPORT**

Report to:	COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Report of:	Service Director Localisation and Director of Legal and Democratic Services.
Date of Decision:	23 June 2015
SUBJECT:	SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE - UPDATE

1. Purpose of report:
<p>1.1 To update Council Business Management Committee on the arrangements for the support, administration and management of community governance at the District, Ward and Neighbourhood level.</p> <p>1.2 To approve the proposed arrangements for the administration and management of District Committee and Ward Committee / Forum meetings.</p>

2. Recommendations :
<p>2.1 To approve the arrangements for the administration and management of District Committee and Ward Committee / Forum meetings.</p> <p>2.2 To approve the standard agenda templates for District Committee Meeting and Ward Committee / Forum meetings.</p> <p>2.3 To approve further development of the Ward Action Planner / Tracker (Appendix 1 attached).</p> <p>2.4 To note that the Community Governance Review group will receive a report setting out guidance for District Committees and Ward Committees / Forums prior to submission to Cabinet for agreement.</p>

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3. Relevant background/chronology of key events.

- 3.1 On 26 May 2014 a public report was presented to Council Business Management (CBM) Committee advising Committee of the need to provide appropriate and cost effective support for the new arrangements at District Committee and Ward Committees / Forums following changes to the constitution at the Council's AGM in May 2015.

In addition, a private report was taken to the 26 May CBM meeting regarding staffing matters relating to the proposed support arrangements. Detailed work is now being progressed to implement the approach agreed. CBM requested an update report on the new arrangements at the 23 June 2015 CBM meeting.

There are a number of resource constraints on the support that can be provided through the district teams and democratic services for the support that can be provided for the operation of district and ward governance arrangements. This means developing different and smarter ways of working at an officer and member level as well as exploring with partners and community organisations how greater cooperation and joint resourcing of community governance can be shared, building for example on recent initiatives taken forward in Erdington. However, there will be a need for an element of support to ensure the functions and responsibilities of the districts and wards can be properly discharged. The new arrangements will be managed by four area teams coordinated by a small city hub team.

3.2 District Committees

District Committees will agree a programme of bi-monthly meetings, alternating if possible with Ward Committee / Forum meetings. These meetings will be supported by the Council's democratic services officers in the Council House or, as may be necessary, at some other central Birmingham location (to be determined by the Chief Executive or the Lead Officer for District Committees). Business should be conducted in public, except for those few reports, which require private consideration for stated, appropriate reasons.

As decision-making meetings, members of the public may only speak at the invitation of the Chair (Executive Member) or Vice Chair (in the absence of the Chair). Committee rooms should be arranged so as to promote discussions amongst members of the Committee, rather than between the Committee and the public. These Committee meetings will be video streamed. A major function of the new business for District Committee will be exercising a neighbourhood challenge, which will require a similar approach, albeit light touch, to that used for conducting overview and scrutiny hearings with expert witnesses and panel questioning through the chair. In undertaking a neighbourhood challenge involving a number of different services, the executive member may wish, in consultation with members on the district committee, to consider asking a partner representative to lead the neighbourhood challenge. District Conventions will be held annually in a suitable venue within the district area to explore with partners and the wider community needs, priorities and opportunities for the district community plan.

To streamline costs of support and administration each executive member will be supported by a member of the area team in developing a forward plan that will enable the responsibilities and function of the district committee to be effectively discharged across the municipal cycle. This will include the key responsibilities around shaping effective community governance within the district (district and ward committee / forums, local partnerships and community engagement), community planning and neighbourhood challenge.

The co-option of up to five non-voting members on to the District Committee will continue.

This option was introduced in 2012 and there have been mixed views expressed on how productive this has been by both partners and members around the relevance of the engagement given that much of the business at district committee during this time has been focussed on the detail and budgets relating to localised services. This has limited the opportunities for co-optees' active engagement and participation in meetings. However, with the different remit for District Committees adopted for 2015 onwards e.g. in exercising the neighbourhood challenge function and taking forward community planning the opportunities for a more active and dynamic input of co-optees will be strengthened.

The area teams will support the executive member in mapping local partners in their area to build up a registry of active partners drawn from different public services and relevant local private sector and resident, voluntary and community sector agencies. This will enable the district to shape a more effective way of working with partners, for example by using the co-optee system more flexibly, bringing in a relevant partner for particular items, by establishing task and finish working groups on particular issues e.g. health or employment and skills and creating a standing panel of partners to invite to district conventions.

Ward Committee / Forums

The service provided by the Council's democratic services has been withdrawn for 2015/16. This includes pre agenda meetings, publicity for meetings, booking and payment for local venues, placing reports on Democracy, inviting speakers and attendees. This means that a new model of servicing and facilitating ward meetings has to be developed for the 2015/16 cycle of meetings. As with district committees the area teams will work with ward committee / forum chairs to develop a forward plan of business, drawing on the areas of defined activity defined by the constitutional remit of the ward committees / forums. Local venues that are accessible, offer Wi -fi and are affordable will be booked by the area teams and set up for the meeting.

Standard Agenda Template

- Recorded actions from previous sessions – not detailed notes including report backs on issues of local concern
- Referrals from and to District Committees / Forums, Cabinet / Cabinet Member, Overview and Scrutiny / Petitions
- Issues for and referrals to Planning Committee

- Petitions received and forwarded
- Presentation to Ward on matters of local relevance – updated live on to the Action Tracker
- Issues of local concern – these will be short issues of concern managed through the Chair on place matters raised and recorded for onward referral to the appropriate agency within the Council or relevant partners¹.
- Consultation on Neighbourhood Forum Grants and Local Investment Fund
- Ward priorities for Community Plans and Neighbourhood Challenge – to refer to District Committee
- Matters of special interest to the Ward – culture, community life, voluntary and active citizenship

A ward action planner / tracker is being developed to go live from September 2015 (appendix 1 attached.)

This will act as one stop tool incorporating:

- a forward plan of items
- standard agenda template
- tool for tracking issues and actions raised.

The tracker will be an online facility on the Council's website enabling documents to be downloaded. The tracker will be completed at the meeting by a member of the area team or a link officer working with the chair. The planner / tracker will be displayed on screen at the meeting. It will enable tracked actions from previous meetings to be closed down, recording of decisions on referrals to the ward to and from planning, district committees, overview & scrutiny, cabinet and council.

Invited speakers will be asked to provide brief presentations or short briefing notes and these will be loaded onto the action planner / tracker. No formal committee reports will be required as no formal decisions will be required. Agreed actions in relation to referrals to and from ward will be recorded on the tracker.

As a member of the area team and/or ward link officer will be present at the meeting, with the action tracker many issues can be recorded for referral across the organisation or to partners limiting the need to call a range of different officers to the meetings. A standard will be set for responses to the tracking referrals binding for Council directorates. There will be facility for calling officers or partners to provide an information briefing or presentations to the ward of relevance to the exercise of its specified remit.

¹ There may be potential to explore as some wards have how this section can work alongside or as part of a Neighbourhood Tasking process. Where practicable report backs will come to the next ward meeting with expectation that they will be closed down within 12 weeks. It should be noted that in some instances a close down may be an answer that the issue cannot be fully resolved with a clear reason stated. Partners engagement in this process will be on a voluntary basis.

Signatures of approval to submit the report to Committee:

Signed:

Title:

Dated:

List of Background Documents used to compile this Report:

List of Appendices accompanying this Report (if any):

1. Ward Action Tracker