

Article 10 - Area Committees and Forums

10.01 Area Committees

The Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2009 chose to cease the operation of its six area committees [known as Town Committees] as a vehicle for local engagement in its decision making process, following dwindling public interest and poor attendance by the public.

The Council subsequently established Town Service Improvement Boards from May 2013, however it was felt that the system of neighbourhood engagement, championed and driven by the Town Lead Members was the most effective process for public involvement at a town and neighbourhood level.

The Council is committed to maintaining a strong emphasis on local engagement with residents through this approach to partnership working and public consultation.

10.02 Neighbourhood Engagement

The Council, in association with its partner organisations will hold two public meetings per year for each ward which will focus on the overall priorities for each Ward.

The first public meeting, 'In Your Neighbourhood Consultation Events' will focus on gathering information from local residents to develop key priorities and actions for the Ward to be known as Ward Pledges. The second public meeting 'Face the People Events' will focus on the public announcement of the Ward Pledges and officers involved in the pledges will provide progress reports.

The meeting will be led by the relevant Neighbourhood Officer who will be supported by Ward Councillors and partner organisations.

In addition the Council have introduced bi-monthly Ward meetings across all 24 Wards known as Neighbourhood Partnership Group Meetings. These meetings are led by the Neighbourhood Officer and provide a structured way of bringing the elected members, partners and the community together (the terms of reference for this meeting are appended to this article).

10.03 **Town Lead Members**

In order to continue and build on community links established by the Chairs of the former Town Committees, the Council has appointed a Town Lead Member for each of its designated six Towns. The main responsibilities of the Lead Member are to:

- Ensure the effective working of the Neighbourhood Engagement Model, encouraging the participation of members of the public in town and ward meetings, and facilitating ward members in representing their communities at community meetings.
- Report to the Council on activities in the town and communicating the views and interests of the town and local community groups at Borough level.
- Provide political and community leadership and to represent the Council's interests in the town at Borough level.

The Town Lead Members will work with the appropriate Cabinet Member(s) and appropriate officers in carrying out this role. The Town Lead Members will ensure that all local avenues have been exhausted in resolving local issues before a Call for Action is instigated by a Ward Councillor; and will be one of the first points of contact for local people wishing to present petitions to the Council.

The detailed portfolio for the Town Lead Member is as follows:

- (1) To undertake the responsibilities of Town Lead Member including:
 - Chairing and ensuring effective working of the Quarterly Councillor Meetings (the terms of reference for this meeting are appended to this article)
 - Facilitating the role of ward members in representing their communities and constituents at Neighbourhood Partnership Group Meetings (the terms of reference for this meeting are appended to this article)
 - Encouraging the participation of members of the public in Town/Ward meetings as necessary;
 - Reporting to the Council on the activities of the Town.
- (2) To provide, in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, political and community leadership and to represent the Council's interests in the Town.
- (3) To ensure, in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, that the views and interests of the Town and local community groups are promoted at Borough level.
- (4) To cascade information as appropriate to ward colleagues, particularly on issues affecting individual wards or neighbourhoods.
- (5) To encourage the full involvement of local people and communities in neighbourhood working.

- (6) To keep abreast of current issues and developments in the Town area.
- (7) To ensure, in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, that town issues and developments are appropriately promoted and publicised.
- (8) To establish good working relationships with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and attend regular monitoring meetings.
- (9) To establish good working relationships with Officers within the Neighbourhood Directorate.
- (10) To ensure that all local avenues have been exhausted in resolving local issues before a Call for Action is instituted by a Ward Councillor.
- (11) To be a first point of contact for local people wishing to submit petitions to the Council and to be responsible for progressing the petition through the Council's structures and to ensure that such petitions are formally recorded and monitored.
- (12) To actively promote community cohesion and associated initiatives in the town.
- (13) To undertake such other duties and roles as may from time to time be assigned to the position by the Leader or the Cabinet.

Special Conditions

1. Town Lead Members must dedicate a minimum of sixteen hours per week to undertake their duties.
2. Town Lead Members must regularly attend quarterly meetings for all Town Lead Members with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods.

3. Town Lead Members must regularly attend quarterly meetings for all Town Lead Members with the Leader and Cabinet.
4. Town Lead Members must attend regular individual meetings with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods.
5. Town Lead Members must commit to a bespoke personal development programme.

Protocol for the relationship between the Town Lead Member and the Communities Unit

The Town Lead Member will provide political guidance and an informal steer to strategic area working based on their priority functions of Community Engagement and Community Cohesion.

The Service Manager Neighbourhoods is responsible for operational management of neighbourhood working.

The Service Manager Neighbourhoods will ensure that all relevant information regarding neighbourhood working within the town is passed to the Town Lead Member in a timely manner.

Quarterly Councillor Meetings

Terms of Reference

Purpose

Quarterly Councillor Meetings bring together Ward Councillors, Council and partners in the town to identify and address issues and priorities of relevance to the local area.

Councillor meetings do not have decision making powers but are influential and should play a vital role in ensuring that the voice of the local community is fed into decision making within the Council where it affects a Ward.

Roles and responsibilities

Quarterly Councillor Meetings provide a forum to discuss all issues of importance to the local community and town. In particular, meetings should:-

- i. For the Council and partners to bring items of local importance to meetings to seek views and steer
- ii. Share information on what's going on in the town/ward – community events, local consultation, changes to services, etc
- iii. Identify investment priorities for the town
- iv. To play a role in allocation of Council funding initiatives by raising awareness and inviting applications from local groups
- v. Make contact with other local resident forums and Children's Centres Advisory Boards to agree how best to work together and share information
- vi. Be accountable to local people – by ensuring that local people are kept up to date on the business of towns/wards

vii. Be accountable back to Neighbourhood Partnership Groups.

Membership

The membership will be all Ward Councillors within the Town.

The meeting will be chaired by the Town Lead Member.

The respective Neighbourhood Service Manager will be the Council's lead officer.

Administration

Notes from the meeting will be taken and circulated after each Quarterly Councillor Meeting by Business Support to elected Members and attendees, detailing progress on delivery and actions agreed.

Meetings

All meetings will be held in private. Relevant representatives will be invited to attend as necessary.

Neighbourhood Partnership Group

Terms of Reference

Neighbourhood Partnership Group meetings will take place across the 24 Wards and will provide a structured way of bringing elected members, partners and the community together to develop tailored solutions for the local community. The Neighbourhood Partnerships Group will recognise the role of elected members as local champions and ensure their active participation in shaping the priorities of the area.

Aim

Provide operational management for the delivery of the Ward Pledges, to:-

- Ensure that Neighbourhood Partnerships are tackling neighbourhood issues to improve the quality of life for residents in the Ward
- Agree ward priorities
- Lead on the development and delivery of Ward Pledges
- Analyse and review local data and intelligence to inform priorities
- Working across partnerships to problem solve and join-up service delivery in response to local issues

Objectives

- To understand the neighbourhood, bringing together knowledge and information from all partners – including the views of the local community
- To obtain and analyse local area data held by partners in order to monitor, change and identify trends and changing needs of the communities to effectively prioritise actions and plan for the future
- To ensure regular community consultation, engagement and feedback on issues, concerns and priorities within the Ward
- To develop and maintain a database of local resources, including community facilities and assets, stakeholder/community networks and service infrastructure
- To facilitate and co-ordinate joint working around identified priorities

Membership

The Neighbourhood Partnership Group will be chaired by the Neighbourhood Officer and will be supported by the Neighbourhood Assistant.

The membership of the Neighbourhood Partnership Group will be a matter for local decision. However, the minimum core membership will include:-

- Ward Councillors
- Designated officers of Sandwell MBC and partner organisations
- Neighbourhood Police Sgt for the area
- Third Sector representative
- Other partner organisations as appropriate
- Observers can request to attend the meetings or may be invited to attend at the request of the Group. Observers are admitted at the discretion of the Chair

Administration

Notes from the meeting will be taken and circulated after each Neighbourhood Partnership Group Meeting by Business Support to elected Members and attendees, detailing progress on delivery and actions agreed.

The Neighbourhood Officer will be responsible for the administration of the Group and for undertaking the management/updates of the Ward Pledges.

Meetings

Meetings will be held on a bi-monthly basis.

All meetings will be held in private. Relevant representatives will be invited to attend as necessary.