

AREA COUNCILS – TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEETINGS PRACTICE

Terms of Reference

To set local priorities in relation to the Electoral Wards comprising the Area and approve the Area Plan

To approve the allocation of the Area Budget and the commissioning of services from the Area Budget to support Area Plan priorities

To monitor the performance of services commissioned from the Area Budget in relation to the Area Council's priorities and desired objectives / outcomes

To influence the planning of services provided on a Borough-wide basis

To request reports as appropriate on area-based service activity

To monitor the performance of area-based services and those Borough-wide services provided locally, and identify issues for attention or action

To consider Councillor Calls for Action that would not more appropriately dealt with by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

To provide a reference point for local consultation and the increase of public engagement

To appoint the community representatives to serve on the Ward Alliances, on the recommendation of the Members of the Ward in question

To receive minutes or reports of the proceedings of Ward Alliances within the Area Council's area, as appropriate

To receive reports on decisions made in relation to the Devolved Ward Budgets

To make recommendations to the Council, Cabinet or the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on relevant matters relating to the area in question

To consider any matters relating to the area in question that might be referred to them by the Council, Cabinet or the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meetings practice

Area Councils are Area Committees of the Executive (Cabinet) under the terms of the Local Government Act 2000. Meetings will be subject to the relevant provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 in relation to the notice for meetings and availability of papers. Meeting will be held in public, but direct public participation will not be permitted.

The Council's Standing Orders in relation to the chairing of and voting in meetings and disclosure of pecuniary interest will apply to meetings of Area Councils. The quorum for a meeting will be one Member for each Electoral Ward in the area plus one additional Member who are eligible to vote in the matter under consideration.

AREA COUNCILS

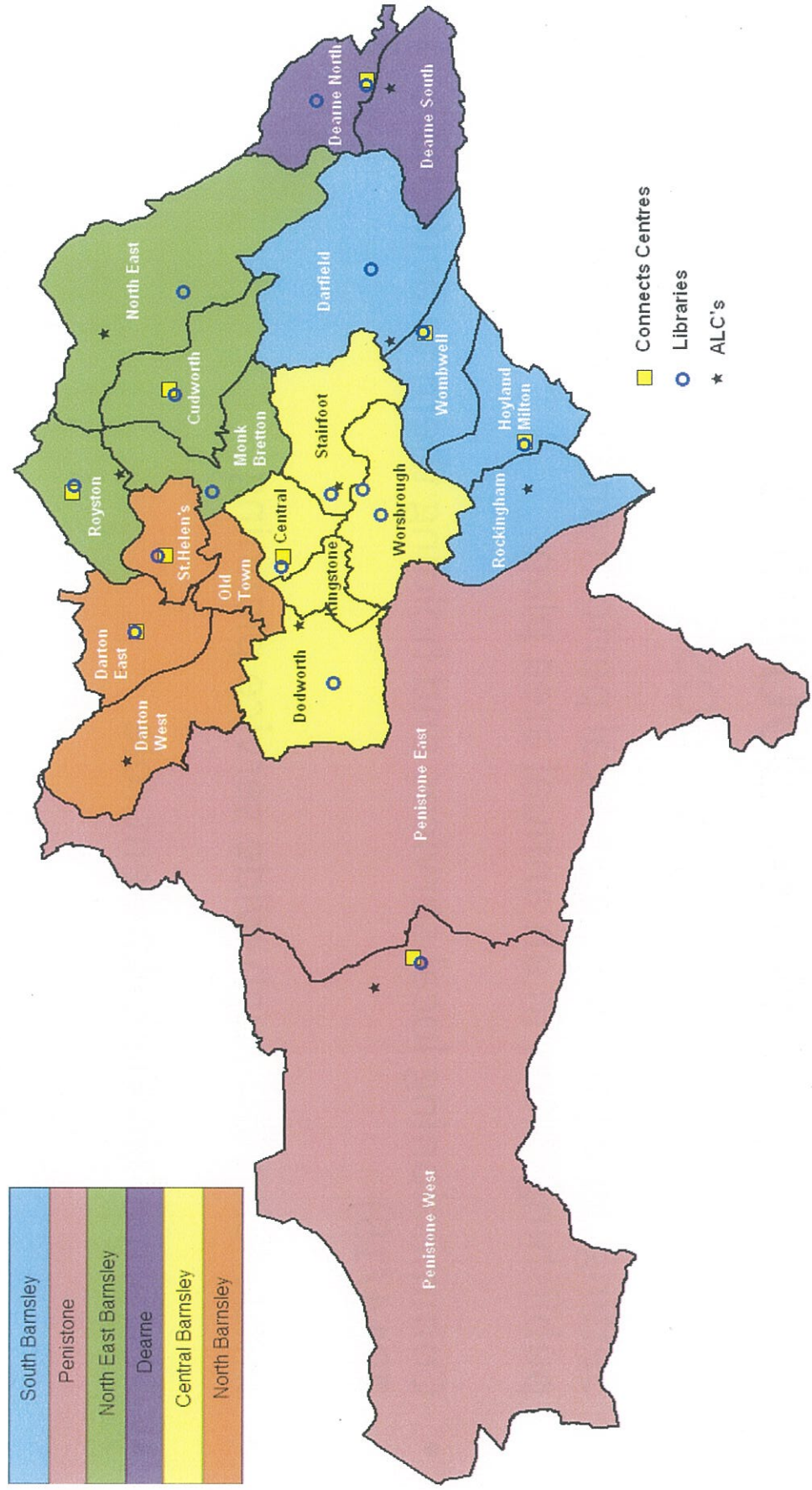
PURPOSE

- Setting area priorities and local performance management - publishing these in an annual area plan
- Commissioning local services and holding them to account (from 2014/15)
- Influencing Borough-wide service planning
- Performance management role
- Grow community capacity by commissioning local services and volunteering

CONTEXT – NEW AREAS

Suggested new colours and names

AREA GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS



AREA COUNCILS

PRACTICALITIES

- Formal meetings held in public (no direct public participation)
- Area Chair (expressions of interest & appointment by Leader)
- Supported by an Area Team & Council Governance
- Six meetings every year
- Minutes reported to Council
- Area Council to co-op/invite others to contribute to the performance monitoring function.
- Annual review of Area Plans.

DEVOLVED BUDGETS 2013/14

- Devolved Ward Budget £20k/ward
 - Allocated by Ward Members
 - Used to support community groups and local services
- Ward Alliance Fund £10k/ward
 - Allocated by Ward Alliance
 - Aim to instigate social action & volunteering
 - Requires successful applicants ‘give something back’
 - Decisions reported to Area Council

DEVOLVED BUDGETS 2014/15

- Area Council Commissioning Budget
 - £2.1m budget allocated equally by number of wards in the area (2 wards = £200k, 4 wards = £400k etc).
 - Determined by Area Council to meet strategic needs of the Area.
 - Make use of Barnsley-based organisations.
- Ward funding at £30k/ward
 - Increased to allow greater social action.

DEVELOPING ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

- Era of reducing resources challenges traditional Elected Member community role
- Reduced ability for council to find/fund solutions to Member requests.
- Developing effective Elected Members role in this context?
- Develop Member 'community leadership' role – working together to find solutions.
- New governance structure seeks to support this new role for Members.
- Develop role of officers to support community engagement.

Role Description

BARNLSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Chair of an Area Council

Area Councils

Barnsley Council has established Area Councils so that all elected members can take responsibility for local planning, decision making and performance monitoring of local services. All elected members have a joint responsibility to make sure that their Area Council works effectively in a consensual and co-operative way.

The Chair of an Area Council has a key role to play in enabling elected members to do this and in making sure that the Area Council works effectively. In particular, the Chair will ensure that there is co-operation and consensus between the elected members about what their Area Council should do and how it should use the resources delegated to it. They also need to play a lead role in helping the Area Council and its members to work with partner organisations, community groups and individuals in their areas so as to reach agreement on what needs to be done and what action to take.

Roles and responsibilities

1 Chairing

Responsibilities.

Chair meetings according to standing orders and code of conduct

To chair and facilitate meetings of the Area Council, to ensure that meetings are conducted in line with standing orders and financial regulations. To ensure the members abide by the Borough Council's code of conduct during these meetings;

Chair meetings to ensure cooperation and collaboration

To ensure that the meetings of the Area Council are conducted in a co-operative and collaborative / enabling way.

Chair meetings to enable full participation of all members

To promote and encourage elected member ownership of the work of the Area Council, especially

by encouraging / enabling them to ask questions, gather evidence, prepare reports for Area Council meetings and undertake appropriate personal research and analysis;

2 Area Planning

Responsibilities.

Enable members to develop the Area Plan

To ensure along with the Area Officer, members are enabled to develop a strategic plan for the Area Council and its communities, to implement this plan and to promote and secure a real commitment among partner organisations to achieving the shared objectives for the area;

Enable members to collaboratively agree the use of financial resources available

To work collaboratively with and enable other elected members of the Area Council and in consultation with their ward alliances, parish councils (in those places which have them) local people, community groups and partner organisations in order to determine how the financial resources available to the Area Council should be used and what services provided;

Develop effective working relationships with BMBC officers and partner organisations

To establish a productive and co-operative relationship with the Area Manager, the Senior Management Team and the management of other relevant organisations to ensure the effective delivery and performance of services in their area;

3. Finance and Commissioning

Responsibilities.

Ensure that members determine local commissioning of services within the Council's commissioning framework

To work collaboratively / enabling with elected members to determine the scope of service contracts, commissioned by the Area Council. To make sure that the services provided under these contracts: (a) help to achieve the Area Council's strategic plan (b) meet the needs of the area's communities and (c) are in line with the Borough Council's contractual and financial rules;

Ensure that members effectively monitor local contracts

To enable members to effectively oversee and monitor service contracts aligned with the priorities and key actions of the Area Plan.

4. Performance and Scrutiny

Responsibilities.

Facilitate local performance management of services by members

To enable members of the area council to determine what local service performance and other issues need to be monitored and enable them to monitor performance of service providers to ensure that they are working appropriately and delivering the required objectives.

Ensure that all members determine and conduct local scrutiny activity

To determine the scope and purpose of any scrutiny investigations, ensuring that they are carried out effectively by the Area Council and its members and that any recommendations for action following these investigations are drawn up and referred on to the borough-wide Overview & Scrutiny Committee where appropriate.

Enable members to gather local evidence to contribute to BMBC scrutiny investigations

In collaboration with local elected members, encourage and enable community evidence gathering within the area to contribute to borough wide Overview & Scrutiny Committee investigations when required.

5. Formal Governance arrangements

Responsibilities.

Represent the Area Council in BMBC meetings as required

To act as the representative and spokesperson of the Area Council within the Borough Council's overall political management arrangements, to include participating Cabinet meetings as and when required.

Act as Spokesperson for the Area Council at Full Council meetings

To move the minutes of the Area Council at Borough Council meetings and to respond to any questions on the work or decisions of the Area Council;

Work collaboratively with other Area Council Chairs as required

To work in collaboration with other Area Council Chairs to ensure the interests of the Area Council are fully represented and to enable their Area Council to work effectively.

Work in support of other Area Council members in their ward as required by the ward members

To support local members if required by acting as the spokesperson for the Area Council and explain to service users, community groups and other organisations: (a) the Area Council's strategic plan and goals for the area and (b) the performance of local services

Understand the service delivery, social, economic and other issues related to all of the wards which make up the Area Council

To carry out personal research in consultation with other members and the representatives of other organisations etc to understand fully the key social, economic and other issues of importance for all the wards which make up the Area Council.

6 General Responsibilities.

Take part in identified development activities relating to the role and responsibilities

To take part in the appropriate and required member development activities for the role of Area Council Chair;

Agree any media communications with the Area Council in liaison with the Council's corporate communications.

To work collaboratively and in agreement with other members and in consultation with the Council's corporate communications to ensure the Area Council is positively represented to the public.

Knowledge and Skills required to carry out these responsibilities

- Chairing skills
- Leadership skills
- Decision making skills
- Negotiation skills
- Mediation skills
- Problem solving skills
- People handling skills
- Communication skills – able to act as and advocate and to represent the Area Council to partners, the public and to the media.
- Time management and organisational skills
- Ability to work effectively with others
- Ability to understand financial and performance monitoring information
- Knowledge of BMBC services
- Knowledge of external partners

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Role Description

BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Local Member

Role Outline

Representing communities

Councillors have a key role to play in representing their communities, both at a borough-wide level, their area councils and their wards. They do this when dealing with council services, partners and other organisations. Local members are the main link between the Council and Barnsley's different communities. They represent their views to the Council and the Council to their communities.

They are often the first people whom residents turn to when there is a problem or when they want to know more about what the Council and other organisations are doing. Councillors are also the ones who have to tell local people bad news; especially what services are no longer going to be provided and what they will now have to do for themselves.

Community leadership

As well as representing, councillors also lead their local communities. They are able to speak up for and bring together the interests of their constituents and their wards in a way that no one else can. As part of this they have to work with other elected members and local people to help develop a clear vision of where their community wants to be and how it wants to get there.

Local members also have a wide range of knowledge and experience, especially on practical issues around how to organise groups and carry out specific work tasks. They have to use this knowledge and experience to help community and other groups in their areas to do more for themselves and for local people.

Performance Monitoring

Local members have a big role to play in helping to make sure that the services for their communities are working well and delivering what they are supposed to be delivering. In particular, they need to make sure that the services contracted by their Area Council really do meet the needs of the area's communities.

Essentials

On top of all this, local members have some 'essential' roles which they need to carry out. They have to serve on the other parts of the Borough Council's constitutional arrangements and if necessary on outside bodies. They also have to behave in an appropriate way and finally to help make sure that they can better carry out their roles by taking part in member development activities.

Specific responsibilities

1. Representing communities

Responsibilities

Individual Casework

- To help individuals and families in their wards sort out and resolve any complaints which they have about the Council and other organisations.

Working with communities to identify community perspectives

- To represent the interests of their ward, area and the borough as a whole when dealing with council services, partners, other organisations and the wider community;

Championing community and ward perspectives in Area Council decision making

- To actively participate in the Borough Council's neighbourhood governance arrangements and in particular the work of their Area Council, especially by working collaboratively with other local members,

Analysing information and data in order to support / evidence community concerns

- To ask questions, gather evidence, help to prepare reports for Area Council meetings and undertake appropriate personal research and analysis;

Representing community perspectives in Council meetings

- To raise at Council meetings issues of concern of importance which are relevant to their local communities, as appropriate;

2. Performance

Responsibilities

Monitoring with ward alliance and community groups concerns relating to local services;

- To advise on and follow-up complaints and concerns raised by constituents about council services and the services provided by other private, voluntary and other public sector bodies;

Working with Area Council members to scrutinise services

- To work collaboratively with other local members to determine the scope of service contracts commissioned by the Area Council. To make sure that the services provided under these contracts: (a) help to achieve the Area Council's vision, (b) meet the needs of the area's communities and (c) are in line with the Borough Council's contractual and financial rules;
- To monitor and scrutinise the performance of service providers to ensure that they are working appropriately and delivering the objectives they were expected to achieve;
- To determine in consultation with other elected members what local service performance and other issues ought to be scrutinised;
- To reach agreement with other members on the scope and objectives of any scrutiny investigations and ensure that they are carried out effectively by the Area Council, with the full participation of its members;

Involvement in Borough-wide scrutiny activity

Responsibilities

- To draw-up in collaboration and with the agreement of members of the Area Council specific recommendations for action following local investigations or for referral to the borough-wide Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
- To facilitate, in collaboration with other local members, borough-wide Overview & Scrutiny Committee investigations, by encouraging and taking part in community evidence gathering for these investigations within their ward and area;

3. Community leadership

Responsibilities

Leading and supporting community engagement and local project development

- To participate in and advise local community schemes and initiatives to manage and deliver local services and facilities.

Creating effective ward alliances

- To work collaboratively with other elected members in their ward, Area Council and in consultation with their ward alliances, parish councils (in those places which have them), local people, community groups and partner organisations;

Collaborating in strategic area planning with the Area Council

- To work collaboratively with other elected members to: (a) develop a strategic plan for their ward, Area Council and its communities, (b) determine the strategic approach for achieving this vision and (c) promote and secure a real commitment among partner organisations to achieving this plan and shared objectives for the ward and the area

Involvement in local commissioning within the Area Council framework;

- To determine how the financial resources available to the ward and Area Council should be used and what services should be commissioned and provided;

Developing effective relationships with all agencies

- To participate actively in the life of the local community and support and assist neighbourhood and other groups, as well as individuals, to work collaboratively in order to meet the needs of the ward, area and borough as a whole;

4. Essentials.

Responsibilities

Serving on BMBC regulatory boards and outside bodies as required

- To serve on the Council's decision-making, regulatory and scrutiny arrangements, as appropriate;

Identifying and participating in Member Development opportunities

- To take part in the appropriate and required member development activities for these roles;

Abiding by BMBC standing order, financial regulations and code of conduct

- To conduct themselves in line with the Borough Council's standing orders and financial regulations. To abide by the Borough Council's code of conduct.

Skills required to carry out these responsibilities

- Decision-making skills
- Negotiation skills
- Mediation skills
- Media / communication handling skills
- People handling skills
- Advocacy skills
- Time management and organisational skills
- Ability to work effectively with others
- Ability to understand financial and performance monitoring information

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