

Area Councils

Terms of reference and governance arrangements

Introduction

Barnsley Council approved new area governance arrangements in November 2012, to support and enable the delivery of its Corporate Plan priorities. In particular, members agreed that:

- six Area Councils be established as Area Committees of the Executive, as defined by the Local Government Act 2000, with effect from May 2013;
- the terms of reference for the Area Councils include the commissioning of services and the setting of devolved budgets, for overall approval by the borough Council;
- the operation of devolved budgets by Area Councils take effect from 1st April 2014;
- 21 Ward Alliances be established as a basis for facilitating closer community engagement.

Governance and budgetary arrangements

Area Councils vary in size from 2 to 5 electoral wards, to reflect the borough's natural communities as much as possible. They are organised as follows:

Area Council	Electoral Wards
Central	Central, Dodworth, Kingstone, Stairfoot, Worsbrough
Dearne	Dearne North, Dearne South
North	Darton East, Darton West, Old Town, St. Helen's
North East	Cudworth, Monk Bretton, North East, Royston
Penistone	Penistone East, Penistone West
South	Darfield, Hoyland Milton, Rockingham, Wombwell

The Chair of each Area Council is chosen by the Leader of the Council from amongst the members representing the relevant wards, and appointed for a period of one municipal year.

Each Area Council meets 6 times per year, with appropriate officer support. Minutes are taken, approved at the following meeting, and received by full Council as appropriate. The quorum for each Area Council is one Member per constituent ward, plus one additional Member.

Devolved budgets will be allocated to Area Councils on a proportionate basis, depending on their size. For example, Central Area Council will be allocated £500,000 for 2014/15, whilst Penistone and Dearne Area Councils will receive

£200,000 each. The purpose of these budgets is to provide local discretion on how borough-wide services can be enhanced or modified to meet the particular needs of the borough's many communities.

Each Area Council will during 2013/14 prepare an Area Plan that will set out its priorities for the local area, which will in turn help guide members' decisions on which services the Area Council should commission from its devolved budget. Local people will have an opportunity to comment on the Area Plan whilst it is still in draft form.

The commissioning process will take account of value for money and the borough Council's procurement principles, in particular the use of competitive quotations. However, the Area Councils will be able to operate these principles flexibly and maximise opportunities for local businesses and community groups to bid for available contracts.

Terms of reference

The revised Area Council terms of reference were approved by the Council's Cabinet on 22nd October 2014 as follows:

- To use data and intelligence to arrive at and agree local priorities for the Area, which comprises a number of Electoral Wards, as defined by Full Council.
- To 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 internal and external services provided on a Borough-wide basis.
- To request reports as appropriate on area-based service activity from internal or external providers.
- To consider local issues identified by Members about the delivery of area-based services and those Borough-wide services provided locally, and identify issues for attention or action, including reference to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees where strategic or policy issues are raised.
- 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 receive notes 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, Ward Alliance Funds and other funding pertaining to the area.
- To make recommendations to the Council, Cabinet or the Overview and 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 and Scrutiny Committee.
- To appoint a Member of the Area Council to represent the interests of the area on consultative or advisory bodies.
- To establish sub-groups, working groups or workshops to discuss issues in more detail and report back to the Area Council.
- To work collaboratively with other Area Councils, sharing best practice and taking advantage of economies of scale where appropriate.

Meetings Practice

Area Council 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 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in relation to the notice for meetings, content of reports 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.