

SECTION 9

9. Area Committees

9.1 Introduction

In order to promote close working with our communities there are five Area Committees which cover different geographical areas of the district. The Area Committees are given substantial powers and responsibilities, within the parameters of the policies set by the Council and Cabinet and as set out in the terms of reference, including the ability to consider and report to Cabinet and Council on any matter affecting their area. Area Committees must operate within Council policy and decisions must be consistent with the Budget and Policy framework and service specific policies.

9.2 Form, composition and function

9.2.1 The Council will appoint Area Committees as set out in the first column of the table below. The Wards to be included within the area administered by each Area Committee are shown in the second column of the table below.

Area Committee	Membership	Composition
Baldock and District Committee	6	The Wards of Baldock East and Baldock Town, the Arbury Ward and the Weston and Sandon Ward which comprise the parishes of Ashwell, Bygrave, Caldecote, Clothall, Hinxworth, Newnham, Radwell, Rushden, Sandon, Wallington and Weston.
Hitchin Committee	13	The Wards of Hitchin Bearton, Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton, Hitchin Priory (including the north ward of the parish of St Ippolyts) and Hitchin Walsworth.
Letchworth Committee	13	The Wards of Letchworth Grange, Letchworth East, Letchworth South East, Letchworth South West and Letchworth Wilbury.
Royston and District Committee	7	The Wards of Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace (which comprise the area of Royston Town Council) and the Ermine Ward (which comprises the parishes of Barkway, Barley, Kelshall, Nuthampstead, Reed and Therfield).
Southern Rural Committee	10	The Wards of Cadwell, Chesfield, Codicote, Graveley and Wymondley, Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo, Kimpton and Knebworth which comprise the parishes of Codicote, Graveley, Great Ashby, Hexton, Holwell, Ickleford, the south

		Ward of the parish of St Ippolyts (south ward), Kings Walden, Kimpton, Knebworth, Langley, Lilley, Offley, St Pauls Walden, Pirton, Preston and Wymondley.
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9.2.2 All Members of the Council will be a member of the Area Committee that includes their own Ward.

9.2.3 The Area Committee elects its Chair and Vice-Chair annually.

9.3 Delegations

The Council and Cabinet will include details of the delegations to Area Committees. The delegations to Area Committees will include budgets for the purpose of providing grants and discretionary budgets that may be used within the area of the Committee for economic, social and environmental well-being.

9.4 Area Committees - Access to Information

9.4.1 Area Committees will comply with the Access to Information Rules in Part 15 of this Constitution.

9.4.2 Agendas and Notices for Area Committee meetings which deal with both functions of the Cabinet and functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet will state clearly which items are which.

9.5 Cabinet Members on Area Committees

A Member of the Cabinet may serve on, and chair, an Area Committee.

9.6 Quorum

9.6.1 The quorum for meetings of Area Committees will be:

Baldock and District Committee 3
Hitchin Committee 7
Letchworth Committee 7
Royston and District Committee 3
Southern Rural Committee 5

9.6.2 In the event of a tie the Chair will have a casting vote.

9.7 Meetings

9.7.1 There will be a maximum²⁶ of four (4) ordinary meetings of each Area Committee per year.

9.7.2 Extraordinary meetings can be called by the Proper Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council following a request of the

²⁶ As from civic year 2016/17

Chair, giving due notice as required by the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

- 9.7.3 At an extraordinary meeting of an Area Committee the only business to be transacted will be that included within the summons to attend the meeting.

9.8 Terms of Reference

9.8.1 Policy - exercise of decisions by resolution

- (a) To allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council.
- (b) To allocate devolved budgets and activities within the terms determined by the Council.
- (c) To promote the introduction of local byelaws.
- (d) To maintain public War Memorials.
- (e) To provide art in public places.

9.8.2 Community

- (a) To undertake a community leadership role in bringing together different interest groups from the public, private and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to meet the Council's corporate strategic and local objectives.
- (b) To consider the policies and actions of the Cabinet as to their appropriateness to the needs and aspirations of local communities.
- (c) To receive petitions, presentations and questions from members of the public, groups and outside bodies on matters relating to their area.
- (d) To act as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest and in particular to elicit/hear the views of local bodies and organisations.
- (e) To make arrangements for the provision of information about local services and other matters to people in the area.
- (f) To provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services.
- (g) In line with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement to receive any presentations from developers on major planning applications for 100 dwelling and above (including Construction Management Routes) and provide comments accordingly.
- (h) To establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically within the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. but excluding grants for district-wide activities (determined under delegated authority).

Delegated powers	Delegated Members and Officers
The provision of revenue ²⁷ grant aid/financial support where the grant aid/financial support is to facilitate an event which will take place prior to the next meeting of the Area Committee.	The Executive Member for Community Engagement, having consulted the Chair or Vice Chair of the relevant Area Committee or where no Chair or Vice Chair – the Members of the Area Committee by majority or those responding, or confirming via virtual means, and Service Director: Legal and Community; or on recommendation of grants panel.

9.8.3 Protocols

- (a) Within the above Terms of Reference, the style and tone of a meeting and the way it is managed will be determined by the Chair and Committee members.
- (b) There is no intention to be prescriptive about the management of meetings, but rather to let local Members run their business in ways that best reflect their local areas, provided that decisions are consistent with the Council's Budget and Policy framework and service specific policies.
- (c) Notwithstanding this, the following are guidelines to assist Members in determining their approach:
 - (i) Members of the public may request to speak at a meeting and must give advance notice of their intention to do so by contacting the Democratic Services Manager by noon of the day of the meeting. The option to speak will be at the discretion of the Chair. In normal circumstances there would be a maximum time allowed of ten (10) minutes. This action would fall within the agenda item of Public Participation.
 - (ii) County Councillors are able to attend area meetings and may speak, but not vote, subject to having notified the Chair of their wish to do so. Such notification to be given to the Democratic Services Manager before 4pm on the day of the meeting.
 - (iii) Parish Councillors are able to attend area meetings, but should do so as members of the public and sit in the public gallery, unless specifically requested to participate by the Chair. Parish Councillors do not have a right to speak at a meeting, but may do so at the discretion of the Chair.
 - (iv) The Chair may invite advisors to meetings as and when required to assist in discussion. They may speak as directed by the Chair but not vote.

²⁷ This does not include Capital Grants recommended through the Capital Grant Panel

- (v) At Area Committee meetings, with the exception of the Area Champions and Committee Administrators, officers should only "come to the table" to present their reports. Once they have done this they may return to the public gallery or feel free to leave the meeting.
- (vi) For items where the Committee resolves to exclude the public and press, officers should remain outside of the meeting room until called in to present their report, and once this has been discussed, they should leave the meeting.