

Committee Model Working Group

27th October 2023



Report of: Area Committees Sub-group

Title: Local decision-making

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Director – Legal and Democratic Services

Recommendations:

That the Committee Model Working Group considers and makes recommendations in respect of the matters raised in this report.

The significant issues in the report are:

This report sets out the potential options for local decision-making through Area Committees. It identifies options that could be taken forward from May 2024, options to be explored in more detail in the future and options that it is not recommended should be taken forward.

The report also sets details of the potential next phase of work for the Sub-group.



1. Summary

At its meeting on 26 May 2023, the Working Group considered a report relating to local decision-making. The Working Group agreed to establish an Area Committees Sub-group to look in more detail at the options for greater local decision-making through Area Committees and for the Sub-group to report back to the Working Group with its recommendations.

This report from the Sub-group sets out a number of matters for the Working Group to consider in respect of local decision-making through Area Committees.

This report identifies options that could be taken forward from May 2024, options to be explored in more detail in the future and options that it is not recommended should be taken forward.

The report also sets out the potential next phase of work for the Sub-group.

The Working Group will need to make recommendations about the matters raised in this report. Those recommendations, together with recommendations from other meetings of the Working Group, will be reported to Full Council in due course, where a final decision will be taken regarding the arrangements for the Committee Model of governance.

2. Summary of the work of the Sub-group

The Sub-group has met regularly since it was established to consider the options for local decision-making. Officers have provided professional and technical advice to the Sub-group about the different options. For example, officers have advised on the current decision-making and delegations, budget and staffing matters and the risks and opportunities for each of the options.

The Sub-group has categorised the options into 3 groups:

- Phase 1 options that it is recommended should be implemented in May 2024;
- Phase 2 options that it is recommended should be considered as future options; and
- Options not recommended for local decision-making.

Each of these groups of options is considered in more detail below.

3. Options for local decision-making – Phase 1

The Sub-group has considered the following matters and recommends to the Working Group that they are taken forward as Phase 1 of local decision-making in May 2024.

Name of option	Comments	Phase 1/Phase 2/Not recommended
Community Investment Funds	Preparatory work can be done to understand how to ensure an equitable distribution of funding across the City in anticipation of the next round of grant funding allocations.	Phase 1
CIL/S.106 funding	The current arrangements for local CIL/S.106	Phase 1

	decision-making through Area Committees should continue.	
Holding delivery of services to account	An Area Committee can refer matters raised with it under Public Forum to a relevant officer in the Council for a response.	Phase 1
Highways Maintenance	A requirement to communicate with Area Committees about the prioritisation of highways maintenance works.	Phase 1
Road Safety Budgets	There should be greater involvement of Area Committees in prioritisation of road safety schemes. This is subject to a review of the resourcing requirements in the relevant departments, to include a review of the budgets that could be devolved to Area Committees in respect of road safety schemes.	Phase 1
Parks and Play Areas	Annual consultation role for Area Committees in respect of changes to front line services and provision, e.g. grass cutting frequency, play area equipment.	Phase 1
Disposal of local authority land, community buildings and community asset transfers	The Area Committee should be consulted on any proposal to dispose of local authority land, community buildings or any community asset transfer, recognising that some transactions will be commercially sensitive.	Phase 1
Allotments	The Area Committee should be consulted about any new allotment provision.	Phase 1
Street cleaning, provision of street bins and enhanced street recycling	This links to the current contractual arrangements with Bristol Waste Company. There should be liaison with BWC representatives at a local level.	Phase 1

4. Future options for local decision-making – Phase 2

The Sub-group has considered a number of other matters and recommends to the Working Group that they should be considered as future options for local decision-making in Phase 2.

To summarise, the areas of Council activity for future consideration are as follows: the Council's role in supporting the creation of Community Plans, the Role of Community workers, a general power of action at ward and individual councillor level, development of the strategies for parks and play areas, planning and licensing functions (i.e., the determination of planning applications/licensing applications), the development of youth provision, a review of the management of enforcement activity, review of waste functions, for example, the approach to street cleaning, provision of street bins and enhanced street recycling and a review of environmental action budgets and local sustainability and environmental initiatives and community art programmes.

These areas of Council activity will require further due diligence, in some cases feasibility work will be required to review the current service delivery model, resourcing requirements and the arrangements with third parties. The Sub-group recommends that all of the above matters should be considered

further post-May 2024.

5. Options not recommended for local decision-making

After careful consideration, the Sub-group recommends that the following options should not be taken forward as part of local decision-making through Area Committees as they are either not feasible to take forward at this time, or there are no specific resources allocated to these matters: delegated community action budgets, major events in parks, libraries, social housing, footpaths and public rights of way.

6. Next phase of work for the Sub-group

Subject to the decision of the Working Group about the options set out in the preceding sections of this report, the Sub-group considers that the following matters will need to be considered by the Sub-group in its next phase of work.

- The structure and governance of Area Committees, in particular the Terms of Reference of Area Committees, the number of committees, the geographical area that they cover, the frequency of meetings and the location of meetings;
- The detailed arrangements relating to each of the Phase 1 options that the Working Group considers should be taken forward, including any resourcing and funding requirements;
- Engagement with key stakeholders, for example the Police and Bristol Waste Company; and
- Preparation for the public engagement events that will take place in the Autumn, which will consider local decision-making.

7. Legal and Constitutional matters

The Legal and Constitutional matters raised by this report are as follows.

Area committees are currently committees of council and Part 3 of the Council's Constitution contains the terms of reference and rules of procedure relating to Area Committees.

Under the committee system, Area Committees will be set up under s.102(1)(a) of LGA 1972 and power will be delegated to them by Full Council under s.101(1)(a) of LGA 1972 i.e., in the same way as all other council committees.

The political balance requirements under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 do not apply to Area Committees by virtue of Regulation 16A of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

8. Financial matters

Further details relating to any financial and resourcing matters will need to be considered by the Sub-

group in the context of the development of the Council's budget for 2024/25.

9. Matters for the Working Group to consider

The Working Group should consider the following matters as part of the preparation for the Committee Model of governance.

- a. Does the Working Group support the principle of a phased approach to the development of local decision-making options?
- b. Does the Working Group support the Phase 1 options for local decision-making?
- c. Does the Working Group support the implementation of the Phase 1 options in May 2024?
- d. Does the Working Group support the Phase 2 options for local decision-making and that these should be considered in more detail in the future?
- e. Does the Working Group agree the options that are not recommended to be taken forward as local decision-making?
- f. Does the Working Group support the recommendation for the next phase of work for the Area Committee Sub-group?
- g. Does the Working Group have any initial views about the structure and geographical areas of the Area Committees?

Appendices:

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None