

# Committee Model Working Group

24<sup>th</sup> November 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 to Full Council in respect of the matters raised in this report.

## **The significant issues in the report are:**

This report sets out further detail relating to the proposed arrangements for local decision-making through Area Committees for implementation from May 2024.



## 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.

The Area Committees Sub-group has met on a regular basis since June 2023. The focus of the Sub-group's work has been a review of the options that were presented to the Working Group in May. The Sub-group considered a number of factors as part of the review, including how the Council currently delivers certain functions, the resourcing requirements, the risks and opportunities associated with changing the manner in which decisions could be taken. The Sub-group was supported by officers and professional advice was taken about the different options for local decision-making.

The Sub-group reported to the Working Group on 27 October with 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 Working Group endorsed the principles in the report and it was agreed that the Sub-group would undertake some further work to consider the following:

- 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.

This report summarises the proposal for local decision-making from May 2024 for the Working Group to consider so that the arrangements for local decision-making can be finalised and recommendations made to Full Council.

## 2. Local decision-making from May 2024

At its meeting on 27 October, the Working Group endorsed the proposals relating to Phase 1 of local decision-making from May 2024. The proposals are as follows:

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 decision-making through Area Committees should continue.	Phase 1

Delivery of services	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

### 3. Local Road Safety Schemes

One of the specific options that the Sub-group have considered in more detail is the role of Area Committees and decision-making in respect of local road safety schemes. This will involve a review of the how the transport service operates with more of a focus on schemes that are supported by councillors, and which are better able to respond to local concerns.

Funding is likely to come from a variety of sources including the Integrated Transport Block, a source of capital funding from government which is not ringfenced and can be spent at the discretion of local authorities on small transport improvement schemes, such as local road safety schemes. The relevant policy committee will be to determine the allocation of available funding for these schemes and the Area Committees should be able to determine spending priorities within that funding allocation.

### 4. Community Investment Funds

Another option that the Sub-group have considered in more detail is the role of Area Committees and decision making in respect of community investment funds, thorough the Bristol Impact Fund. The Bristol Impact Fund is a source of funding for voluntary and community sector grants which aims to focus spending in the City to reduce inequality and disadvantage.

The Sub-group recommends that further work is done to enable the delegation of decisions about any future Bristol Impact Fund Small Grants to Area Committees. This will require two phases of work: firstly, preparatory work to consider options, criteria, process and resources required during the financial year 2024/25. And secondly, the implementation of decisions during the financial year 2025/26.

## **5. Community Infrastructure Levy**

One of the main sources of funding for Area Committees will continue to be the local element of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The local element of CIL (Local CIL) was introduced to reward communities that embraced new development. It is not intended to be either redistributive or fair, rather to provide those communities in which new development is located, with a financial incentive to enable them to deliver local infrastructure priorities. In rural areas the Local CIL is passed to Parish Councils to allocate. In those areas that do not have parishes (such as Bristol), Local CIL is to be allocated using existing community engagement processes, which in Bristol's case are the Area Committees. Local CIL is capped at 15%, or in areas where a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is in place, 25%. There is no discretion over these percentages as they are set out in government regulations.

Once a CIL payment is received, and the appropriate amount of Local CIL allocated to the relevant Area Committee, there is no restriction on where in the Area Committee area it is to be spent, (other than Local CIL deriving from areas with a NDP in place). However, the majority of development in Bristol is concentrated in relatively few wards, so there is always likely to be a disparity in the level of Local CIL available to Area Committees. In other words, those Area Committees in which most new development takes place will get more in the way of Local CIL than those Area Committees in which little new development takes place.

## **6. Boundaries of Area Committees**

The Sub-group has considered different options relating to the boundaries of Area Committees. The Sub-group has considered the indices of multiple deprivation which considers economic, social and environmental factors to show patterns of deprivation across the City. Appendix 1 of this report provides a map showing the areas of relative deprivation across the City.

There are three options for the Working Group to consider for the boundaries of the Area Committees, including the current arrangement of 6 area committees as well as two further options of 9 and 10 Area Committees. Details of the three options are set out below.

### **Option 1 – 10 Area Committees**

No	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4
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1	Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston	Henbury and Brentry	Southmead	-
2	Stoke Bishop	Westbury on Trym and Henleaze	Redland	Bishopston and Ashley Down
3	Horfield	Lockleaze	Frome Vale	-
4	Clifton	Clifton Down	Cotham	Hotwells and Harbourside
5	Central	Ashley	Lawrence Hill	-
6	Easton	Eastville	Hillfields	-
7	St George West	St George Central	St George Troopers Hill	-
8	Southville	Bedminster	Windmill Hill	Filwood
9	Hartcliffe and Witherwood	Bishopsworth	Hengrove and Whitchurch Park	-
10	Knowle	Stockwood	Brislington West	Brislington East

### Option 2 – 9 Area Committees

No	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4
1	Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston	Henbury and Brentry	Southmead	Horfield
2	Stoke Bishop	Westbury on Trym and Henleaze	Redland	Bishopston and Ashley Down
3	Clifton	Clifton Down	Cotham	Hotwells and Harbourside
4	Central	Ashley	Lawrence Hill	Easton
5	Lockleaze	Eastville	Hillfields	Frome Vale
6	St George West	St George Central	St George Troopers Hill	-
7	Southville	Bedminster	Windmill Hill	Filwood
8	Hartcliffe and Witherwood	Bishopsworth	Hengrove and Whitchurch Park	-
9	Knowle	Stockwood	Brislington West	Brislington East

### Option 3 – 6 Area Committees

No	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 7
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1	Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston	Clifton	Clifton Down	Hotwells and Harbourside	Stoke Bishop	Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze	-
2	Henbury and Brentry	Cotham	Bishopston and Ashley Down	Redland	Southmead	Horfield	-
3	Eastville	Frome Vale	Hillfields	Lockleaze	-	-	-
4	Ashley	Central	Lawrence Hill	St George Central	St George Troopers Hill	St George West	Easton
5	Bedminster	Brislington East	Brislington West	Knowle	Southville	Windmill Hill	-
6	Bishopsworth	Filwood	Hartcliffe and Witherwood	Hengrove and Whitchurch	Stockwood	-	-

The Working Group should consider the different options and make a determination about the recommended number of Area Committees and their boundaries.

## **7. Location and frequency of Area Committee meetings**

The Sub-group have considered the location and frequency of Area Committee meetings. The Sub-group recommend that Area Committees should meet up to 4 times every year and that the meetings will be a combination of in-person meetings and online meetings.

The Sub-group recommend that Area Committees should hold public facing meetings in local areas and that these will meet approximately 2 times per year in person and this will be a specific requirement where formal decisions need to be taken. Members of the public would be able to attend these meetings.

However, there will be some meetings that can be held online which would facilitate information sharing and engagement, provided that no decisions are being taken. Members of the public should also be able to attend remote meetings.

## **8. Engagement and consultation**

The Sub-group have considered the arrangements that need to be in place to ensure that all relevant stakeholders understand the role and responsibilities of Area Committees. In particular, the Sub-group recommend that there is clarity for members of the public in terms of what they can expect from the Area Committees and how members of the public will be able to engage effectively with the Area Committees.

With this in mind, the Sub-group recommend that a protocol for engagement and consultation is prepared that sets out the arrangements for engagement and consultation with the Area Committees.

## **9. Financial and budget implications**

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. The financial and resourcing costs of supporting Area Committees include the resources required in both the Community Engagement and Democratic Services teams as well as the administrative costs of funding room bookings in local communities. It should be noted that any current arrangements for the local support to deliver Local Ward Forums are unaffected by the proposals in this report.

The current arrangements for Area Committees, based on 6 Area Committees meeting twice a year, costs the Council in the region of £80,000 per annum. This is an average cost in the region of £12,000 - £14,000 per Area Committee per annum.

The option for 9 Area Committees meeting twice a year would cost in the region of £110,000 - £125,000 per annum. And the option for 10 Area Committees meeting twice a year would cost in the region of £120,000 - £140,000 per annum.

If the Area Committees were to meet four times per annum, the indicative cost of an increased number of meetings would be in the region of 25,000 per annum per Area Committee, based on the assumption that there would be two formal in-person meetings and two informal online meetings.

Whilst the amount of preparation to support in-person and online meetings is the same, the cost of supporting online meetings will be slightly less as there will not be formal reports and minutes required and venues will not need to be booked.

Therefore, if there were 6 Area Committees, the cost would be in the region of £150,000 for 6 Area Committees, £225,000 for 9 Area Committees and £250,000 for 10 Area Committee.

Any additional funding to support the administration of additional Area Committees would need to be factored into the Council's budget setting process for 2024/25.

## **10. 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.

The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 set out the arrangements relating to the Local election of CIL.

## **11. 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. Which of the options does the Working Group support in respect of the boundaries of Area Committees?
- b. Does the Working Group support the proposal that Area Committees should hold public meetings in local areas of the City?
- c. Does the Working Group support the principle that Area Committees should meet in person 2 times per year?
- d. Does the Working Group support the principle that Area Committees should have the ability to hold remote meetings provided that no decisions are being taken in those remote meetings?
- e. Does the Working Group agree that a Protocol for Engagement and Consultation with Area Committees should be developed?
- f. Does the Working Group have any recommendations to make in respect of the budget/financial assumptions to support the new Area Committee arrangements?

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Indices of Deprivation for Bristol

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**Background Papers:**

None