

## **MEETINGS ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISTRICT COMMITTEES**

### **The Role of District Committees**

The adoption of a revised constitution at Full Council on 22 May 2012 marked a significant change. Constituency Committees have been dis-established and replaced by District Committees<sup>1</sup>. The new District Committees retain all the delegations held by the old Constituency Committees but are also allocated additional responsibilities and a revised remit based around more traditional decision-making. They will be organised, conducted and supported so as to perform very like old-style decision-making committees.

District Committees will focus on key policy priorities at the constituency level, receiving information on the needs of the District and then commissioning, planning and monitoring the delivery of services and programmes designed to meet those needs. The Committees are not expected to engage directly with residents and communities; this is the role of Ward Committees and other constituted bodies such as Neighbourhood Management Boards (where they exist). As part of their strategic remit in meeting needs in their area, District Committees will play a more enabling and empowering role around community and resident engagement and use appropriate feedback in making judgements on service delivery in their area.

### **The Role of Ward Committees**

Ward Committees will fulfil the function of maintaining contact with local residents and community groups through the holding of regular public meetings. They will also agree projects via Community Chest funding and approve grants providing infrastructure support to Neighbourhood Forums based on established priorities in District Plans and within the delegations to the District Committees. Ward Committees will be open to contribution and debate from residents within the Ward and will provide a forum in which they are able to raise matters of local concern. Ward Committees should seek to maximise the opportunities for local communities to shape priorities and work in partnership with District Committees to provide services that reflect the needs of local communities.

Ward Committees are not expected to have sub structures reporting to them such as Ward Advisory Boards. The Ward Chair and Councillors may wish to engage stakeholders appropriately prior to formal decisions on Community Chest. However, as guidance and priorities for Community Chest will be agreed by District Committees through the District Plan (with the input of Wards) it is not considered necessary for Local Services staff to service additional meetings outside of Ward Committees and pre agenda meetings.

Meetings will take place in suitable venues within the Ward area during the evening time.

### **Executive Members for Local Services**

Under the City Council's revised constitution, Councillors who chair District Committees are to be Executive Members for Local Services. They chair the District Committee and are entitled to attend Cabinet meetings.

In their role as chair of the District Committee, they will ensure that the remit and responsibilities of District Committees in relation to their delegations are discharged effectively. At Cabinet they will be able to communicate local views and priorities in the executive decision-making process, including budget making; and feed back appropriately to District Committees. They will be supported and advised by officers in the execution of these roles.

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<sup>1</sup> District Committees: Perry Barr, Ladywood, Erdington, Sutton Coldfield, Hodge Hill, Yardley, Hall Green, Selly Oak, Northfield & Edgbaston.

## **Co-option**

District Committees in the exercise of their devolved responsibilities may co-opt up to five partner representatives.

Co-optees would be **non-voting** members and would solely advise Committee on relevant areas of business through the Chair.

In line with the Council's intention to engage tenants at District Committee in support of the newly devolved housing management function up two standing places should be set aside for District Housing Liaison Panel representatives. One place should be allocated for the Police and one for the Fire Service.

The remaining co-opted advisor will be at the discretion of the District Committee so as to reflect the particular local priorities for partnership engagement and for a relevant period or meeting. This could be from other Public, Education, Voluntary Sector and Business organisations.

## **The Business of District Committees**

The business at every meeting of a District Committee will be to take executive decisions (between £200k and £500k) on the planning and delivery of services locally, providing that the function under consideration has been delegated to District Committees (see Volume B of the Constitution). Over the course of the year, District Committees should arrange to:

- identify particular needs and priorities in the District;
- commission and plan services (whether provided directly by the City Council, by private businesses or other public agencies, or by third sector organisations);
- prepare budgets (working with the central Executive) for devolved services and seek external funding and other resources that contribute to local needs;
- regularly manage financial performance;
- regularly monitor services within the District Committees delegations, other Council services of local relevance and other services of local relevance provided by partners including voluntary and community organisations.

## **District Committee Meetings**

District Committees should agree a programme of bi-monthly meetings, alternating with ward committee meetings, in the first instance. As decision-making meetings, these should take place in the Council House, or as may be necessary at some other central Birmingham location to be determined by the Chief Executive, in day-time during the normal working week.

Business should be conducted in public, except for those few reports which require private consideration for stated, appropriate reasons. As decision-making meetings, members of the public may only speak at the invitation of the Chairman. Committee rooms should be arranged so as to promote discussions amongst members of the Committee, rather than between the Committee and the public. The Council House Chamber has been made available for use, subject to availability, giving opportunity for members of the public to be accommodated in the gallery and for use to be made of the internet streaming facilities enabling members of the public to view the proceedings of the meeting.

## **Reports and Decisions**

District Committees will be taking executive decisions. The reports on their agendas therefore need to meet the City Council's quality standards for executive reports, to ensure that Councillors receive co-ordinated service, legal, financial and HR advice. Committee Managers will not place reports on a District Committee's agenda unless the reports have been agreed by all the appropriate officers and the Executive Reports Checklist fully

completed and sent with the report to Committee Services. It is also the City Council's practice that late executive reports are not circulated to Councillors without the agreement of the Chief Executive.

Executive decisions will be recorded appropriately, posted on the "Democracy in Birmingham" system and subject to call in. A hard copy of the decision record will be kept in each of the Community Libraries.

### **District Conventions**

In addition to the normal programme of meetings, each District Committee will hold an annual District Convention, to agree on District priorities with input from community groups, partners and other stakeholders. This should take place in the second quarter of the year to enable District Committees to input into the wider budget and service planning business cycle.

### **Officer Support**

The core officer support team for each District Committee will consist of:

- the Integrated Services Head for the District;
- a senior lawyer;
- an Area Democratic Services Officer.