



# **The Council's Constitution**

## **Part 4**

### **Standing Orders**

#### **Section E**

##### **Area Forums/Committees**

## **STANDING ORDERS**

### **PART 4 – SECTION E**

#### **AREA COMMITTEES/FORUMS**

#### **GENERAL MATTERS**

##### **E1 WHICH AREA FORUMS/COMMITTEES**

The Council will have the area forums/committees set out in Article 10. The area covered by each area forum shall comprise a number of complete wards, as determined by the Council, on the recommendation of the Cabinet. The areas covered by area forums/committees at the present time are shown in the appendix to these Standing Orders.

##### **E2 ROLE OF AREA FORUMS/COMMITTEES**

The Council will approve a scheme which describes the role of area forum/committees.

The basic role of an area forum is to bring together elected councillors, representatives of community organisations, statutory bodies, businesses, parish councils and local residents to discuss local issues and seek the resolution of problems and the promotion of the present and future well-being of the area. Decision-making powers may be delegated to the elected councillors who, when discharging these, will constitute an area committee.

The Cabinet will decide on any delegated executive decision-making powers.

The Council will decide on any delegation of non-executive powers.

##### **E3 MEMBERSHIP**

The elected councillors for the wards which comprise the area will be the councillor members of the area forum and will comprise the area committee for delegated decision-making purposes.

The council members of an area forum may invite representatives of relevant local bodies (who it feels can contribute to the work of the forum) to participate in the work of the forum.

If any Council or Executive functions are delegated to the area committee/forum, the Councillor members will be the voting members for any decisions made.

#### **E4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Local residents and representatives of local public bodies, community, voluntary and other groups and businesses will be actively encouraged to attend and participate in the work of the forum/committee. Issues may be raised and submissions made without prior notice.

#### **E5 CHAIR**

At their first meeting after the Council's annual meeting, the Council members of the forum/committee will appoint one of their number to be Chair of the forum/committee for the Council year.

Where no party group has a majority of the members of the Area Forum/Committee, the Area Forum/Committee councillors must take account of political balance in the annual election of the chair, so that there is an appropriate proportional sharing of this role between councillors from the various political groups represented during the 4-year life of the Council. The Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services will provide each set of area councillors with advice as to how this might be achieved. The outcome of this process will be reported to the Council.

#### **E6 ROLE OF CHAIR**

The principal role of the Chair is to lead and guide the work of the forum/committee and to chair meetings. The Chair's role is set out in full in the role description approved by the Council. (see Part 7 of the Constitution).

#### **E7 VICE-CHAIR**

An area forum/committee meeting may appoint a vice-chair, if the Chair is unable to be present or has to declare any personal interest which prevents his/her participation in any part of the meeting. The vice-chair of a forum meeting may be a councillor or community member of the forum. The vice-chair of an area committee meeting must be a councillor.

#### **E8 DATES, TIMES AND LOCATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Standing Orders A4, A5 and A6 apply.

Meetings may be held in suitable community-based venues at the discretion of the forum/committee.

#### **E9 SPECIAL MEETINGS**

A special meeting may be called by at least one half of the councillor members of the forum/committee signing a notice to the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, setting out the purpose of the meeting and, if appropriate, the timescale in which the meeting is to be held. The Monitoring

Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services will call the meeting as soon as reasonably practicable.  
The Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services may also call a special meeting in consultation with the Chair.

#### **E10 QUORUM**

A meeting of an area committee exercising delegated powers cannot take place unless at least one third but not less than 3 of the whole councillor membership is present.

There is no quorum for area forum meetings.

#### **E11 LIAISON**

Members of the Executive may attend meetings for liaison purposes.

#### **E12 SUBSTITUTION**

Councillor members of the forum/committee are members because they are local councillors. Therefore no substitution can take place if a councillor is unable to attend a meeting.

#### **E13 JOINT MEETING AND PARTICIPATION OF COUNCILLORS FROM ADJOINING AREAS**

In exceptional circumstances, area forums/committees may have joint meetings about issues of cross-boundary concern.

Alternatively, an area forum/committee may invite councillors from any adjoining area wards to participate in the discussion of any issue of cross-boundary concern.

Any councillor representing a ward adjoining the area of an area forum/committee has the right to attend any meeting of that forum/committee to contribute their views on any issue they consider to impact on their area.

Any other councillor from another area may attend a meeting but may only speak at the discretion of the Chair.

#### **E14 CALL-IN**

When a decision is made by an area committee on an executive function it will be published in accordance with the Call-In Procedure Standing Orders (see Part 4, Section L).

A relevant select committee or any 5 members of council are entitled to give notice to the Cabinet Secretary of their requirement for the decision to be called-in for review by the relevant select committee under the Call-In Procedure Standing Orders.

A relevant executive councillor, in respect of functions for which he/she is ultimately responsible, is entitled to call-in for review by him/her any delegated decision.

## **PREPARATION FOR AREA FORUM/COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **E15 AGENDA PLANNING**

The Chair will guide the development and planning of meeting agendas, with the advice and support of officers and in consultation with other local councillors as appropriate.

### **E16 AGENDA CONTENT**

Agendas may comprise matters relating to Council and general community interest or concern.

### **E17 AGENDA DESPATCH**

The matters to be considered at a meeting will be set down in the agenda. The agenda will be sent to every member of the forum, and made available to the public 10 clear days before the meeting.

The list of agenda items will be made available to councillors who are not members of the forum/committee.

### **E18 CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Area forums are opportunities for community participation and involvement. It is therefore not appropriate for them to consider private or exempt business.

However, when council members sit as an area committee to exercise delegated powers, the public may be excluded when private or exempt business is considered under the Access to Information Standing Orders.

## **AT AREA FORUM/COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **E19 REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE**

Standing Order A37 applies.

### **E20 RECORDING OF MEETINGS**

Standing Order A39 applies.

## **E21 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

The Chair will preside. In the Chair's absence, the forum meeting will elect a vice-chair from amongst the councillors or any co-opted community members. An area committee meeting will elect a vice-chair from amongst the council members.

## **E22 CHAIR – CONDUCT OF MEETING**

Standing Order A40 applies. In chairing a meeting, the Chair must have particular regard to the community context within which area forums or committees meet and the importance of encouraging maximum public participation.

## **E23 OFFICER SUPPORT**

Standing Order C40 applies.

## **E24 CHAIR TAKING PART IN DISCUSSION**

The Chair will participate fully in the discussion of matters by the forum or committee.

## **E25 RULINGS OF THE CHAIR**

Standing Order A52(h) applies.

## **E26 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

The Chair of the area forum will act as the contact member for the media on matters considered at a meeting. A protocol will guide this process.

## **E27 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Standing Orders A43 and A44 apply.

## **E28 CONDUCT OF MEETING**

Within a broadly agreed structure, forums/committees are free to develop the structure of their meetings in whatever way they consider appropriate.

Forum/committee meetings are intended to be highly participate and members of the public attending will be encouraged to take part in discussion and also to raise matters of concern to them. This will be guided by the chair in accordance with the public participation Standing Orders.

A protocol will guide this process.

## **E29 VOTING**

### **(a) Area Forums**

Area forums have no delegated decision-making powers, unless these are given by the Council or the Executive. Any decision-making will therefore relate to the conduct of a meeting, the appointment of a vice-chair or (if appropriate) the agreeing of a common view on an issue for passing on either to the Council's Executive, a non-executive committee or a non-Council body within the community. In these circumstances, all members of the forum will be considered to be "voting" members.

It should not normally be necessary for members to vote in a formal manner. They should seek to arrive at a view by consensus or where there are differing views, acknowledge these in passing comments to the Executive a non-executive committee or non-Council community body.

### **(b) Area Committees**

When the elected councillors meet as a formal area committee, only they are the voting members.

## **E30 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET**

Area forums may ensure that local views and priorities are fed into the Cabinet by submission of a special minute if considered appropriate.

They may also report more formally to the Cabinet on policy and service delivery modifications to better serve the needs of the area.

## **E31 OFFICERS SPEAKING AT MEETINGS**

Standing Order C55 applies.

## **E32 SUSPENSION OF THE MEETING**

Standing Order A64 applies.