

EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2003

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF AREA COMMITTEES

9. **C** There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 10 October 2003 by the Chief Executive (1) enclosing at Appendix 1 to the report, details of the current remit of the Area Committees; (2) reviewing the operation of the Area Committees, and (3) outlining proposals, as detailed in Section 3 of the report, for the enhancement of the future role of the Area Committees.

Councillor McCabe then proposed that in order to reflect the role and importance of Area Committees (a) the Area Committees report direct to this Committee, and (b) the membership of this Committee be reviewed to reflect the change.

Decided:

- (1) that the proposals to enhance the future role of Area Committees, as set out in Section 3 of the report, be approved;
- (2) that it be recommended to the Council (a) that the Area Committees report direct to the Policy and Resources Committee, and (b) that the membership of the Policy and Resources Committee be reviewed to reflect the change;
- (3) that the necessary changes to the Scheme of Administration and Council Standing Orders be progressed, and
- (4) that it be noted that a further report on support arrangements for Area Committees will be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee for consideration as part of next year's budget setting exercise.

To: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE		Subject: DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF AREA COMMITTEES
From: CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Date: 10 October, 2003	Ref: GW/KH	

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the operation of the Area Committees and make recommendations to enhance their future role.

2. Background

2.1 The Council's Scheme of Administration includes six Area Committees:-

- Airdrie
- Bellshill and District
- Coatbridge
- Motherwell and District
- North
- Wishaw and District

2.2 The current remit of an Area Committee is set out at Appendix 1 to this report. Over recent year's the Area Committees have generally concentrated their efforts on the development of area profiles, plans and community forums, processing of community grants, considering presentations on Council services and discussing matters of local concern. Each Area Committee is supported by a team of officers from all Departments lead by a Senior Manager. Minutes of Area Committees are submitted to the Community Development Sub-Committee. More recently each Area Committee, during the Council recess, organised a tour of their area. In addition the Community Services Department has developed more effective support for the community forum network with a Senior Community Development Worker engaging with each community forum.

2.3 At the start of this Council term it is considered appropriate to take stock of the progress made to date by the Area Committees and consider the potential which exists to further enhance their role. Since May 2003 I have attended regular meetings involving the Council Leader, Depute Leader, Area Committee Conveners and all Area Teams to progress this review.

- 2.4 Outwith the role of the Area Committees it is important to recognise that the Council has also made significant progress under its decentralisation scheme
- providing better access to all Council services at a local level
 - devolving service management responsibility across many services linked to the Area Committee boundaries, and
 - engaging with service users and the wider community through exercises such as the residents survey.

3. Proposals

3.1 Arising out of the review it is proposed that a work programme should be progressed over the next year by each Area Committee to further enhance existing remits in the following ways.

3.2 Town Centre Regeneration

- Review and comment on improvement programmes supported by an annual capital investment plan of £5 million
- Agree consultation arrangements with the public and other interested parties on improvement programmes to be pursued by the Department of Planning and Environment
- Receive regular progress reports on programme implementation

3.3 Small Communities Programme

- Develop and implement project proposals to address local needs. Programme has initially been allocated a total of £360,000 (£60,000 per Area Committee in 2004/2005). Intention would be to consider increasing this sum in future capital programme reviews.

3.4 Estate Based Initiatives

- Develop and implement project proposals to address local housing needs funded through the HRA budget – current annual budget is £156,000 in total and again the intention would be to consider increasing this in future budget reviews.

3.5 Service Performance

- Monitor and comment upon service performance on an annual basis comparing local service delivery against Council wide targets and performance.

3.6 Local Plan Preparation

- Review and comment upon proposals presented by the Department of Planning and Environment

3.7 Local Community Planning

- Develop links with Partner Agencies to provide a local Community Planning Forum including the further development of community budgeting initiatives.

- 3.8 As part of the review consideration has also been given to the current arrangements for progressing community grants. To streamline this process it is suggested that in future these should be dealt with under one single Committee ie. the Community Development Sub-Committee rather than involving one application being referred to six Area Committees. Local Members will continue to be involved as at present in terms of recommending grant awards. This change would streamline existing processes and provide a better service to organisations applying for grants.
- 3.9 Consideration has also been given to the existing support arrangements for Area Team Leaders and Area Teams. Discussions are ongoing with the Area Teams on this matter and at this stage it is suggested that a sum of £200,000 be considered as part of the budget setting exercise for next year as a growth item to provide enhanced support for the Area Committees with the details being finalised to correspond with budget consideration in January/early February 2004.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that Committee:-
- (a) Approves the proposals as set out in Section 3 of this report to enhance the future role of Area Committees;
 - (b) Agrees that the detailed changes necessary to the Scheme of Administration and Council Standing Orders be progressed;
 - (c) Remits this report to each of the Area Committees for consideration, and
 - (d) Note that a further report on support arrangements for Area Committees will be submitted to the next Committee and be considered as part of next year's budget setting exercise.



Chief Executive

AREA COMMITTEES

1. To discuss matters of local concern relative to the Council's activities and functions;
2. To consider and discuss the policy and operational arrangements affecting Council activities undertaken within the local area;
3. To consider issues remitted to them by the Council as a matter of particular consultation where there is a specific wish to ascertain the wishes of the community;
4. To consider and make suggestions as to the needs of the area concerning services which are the responsibility of the Council;
5. To develop and update an area profile including local needs, opportunities, issues and resources;
6. To establish and support representative community forums as one mechanism for consultation and community involvement and to develop effective working relationships with them;
7. To support local community groups and voluntary organisations and provide a focus for participation and partnership involving the Council, the local community, the private and voluntary sectors and other public bodies;
8. To make decisions in respect of requests for financial assistance under the Community Grants Scheme and other schemes of grant remitted to Area Committees by the Council and to administer Area Development budgets;
9. To assist the Council in developing twinning links with any authority with which the Council has agreed a formal twinning scheme and which has been traditionally or generally associated with the area of the Committee, and
10. To carry out further functions as determined by the Community Services (Community Development) Sub-Committee.