

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) **Date of Meeting:** 12 September 2017

Cabinet 5 October 2017

Subject: Area Committees Working Group Final Report **Wards Affected:** (All Wards);

Report of: Head of Regulation and Compliance

Is this a Key Decision? Yes **Is it included in the Forward Plan?** Yes
Exempt/Confidential No

Purpose/Summary

To present formally the final report of the Area Committees Working Group.

Recommendations:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory Compliance and Corporate Services and Cabinet

That consideration be given to the submissions by Councillors Jamieson, McGuire and Thomas as detailed in paragraph 6 and Appendix 3 of the Final Report and the most appropriate course of action thereon.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

The Working Group has recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) and the Cabinet consider the submissions detailed in paragraph 6 and Appendix 3 of the Final Report and determine the most appropriate course of action thereon.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options were considered. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) established the Working Group to review the findings of the public consultation exercise undertaken on the role of Area Committees, and the other issues set out in the [report](#) submitted to the Cabinet on 23 June 2016 and the Working Group has performed this task.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Budget options approved by Council on 28 February 2013 reduced the number of Area Committees from 7 to 3 and also reduced the frequency at which they met from 5/6 meetings per year to 4. Therefore the suggestion by Councillor Jamieson to revert back to the smaller more local size Area Committees particularly in areas such as Formby, Crosby etc. may have revenue implications if approved. Furthermore, the Working Group was aware of this fact and at its meeting held on 19 April 2017 resolved:-

“(1) it be agreed that due to budgetary and staff resource constraints the “scaling-up” of the current Area Committee operation was not an option”

(See resolution (1) on page 18 of the Final Report)

It is recommended that if this option is approved then a further report be produced on the associated revenue costs.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no financial implications arising for the Council as a direct result of this report. The implementation of recommendations that result in efficiency savings and any necessary financial investment will be the subject of separate reports.

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Financial		
Legal		
Human Resources		
Equality		
1.	No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable

Place – leadership and influencer:

Three differing models have been suggested by Members of the Working Group which could have an impact on this core purpose.

The proposal by **Councillor Jamieson** suggests reverting back to the smaller more local size Area Committees particularly in areas such as Formby, Crosby etc.; as it has been suggested that a smaller Area Committee model would allow more engagement and interaction at local level between Members and their constituents.

The proposal by **Councillor McGuire** suggests that a ‘one size fits all solution’ would be deeply unsatisfactory; that local Area Committees should have the final say on their future; and proposed the following options be presented to Area Committees for consideration.

Satus Quo – The Area Committee is best to be retained in its current form

Devo Min – The Area Committee should become a fully open public forum held once a quarter.

Devo Max – Area Committee to be retained in its current form with long term plans to devolve further powers to the committee starting with Street Scene.

Abolition – Abolish the Area Committee but retain the ward budget.

The opportunity to review the remit of the Area Committees was welcomed and seven items were suggested relating to their operation; together with detailed proposals for the operation of the Southport Area Committee, namely:-

1. Southport Area Committees retain its title.
2. The meetings are held in Southport Town Hall Council Chamber
3. Council Officers take minutes.
4. Officers are requested to be present by the Chair for relevant items on the agenda.
5. The Town Wide fund is replaced by a new fund made up of funds taken from wards that have more than £10K unspent by the end of the year.
6. The number of meetings should not be reduced.

The proposal by **Councillor Thomas** suggested the establishment of three Constituency Fora covering the Bootle, Sefton Central and Southport Constituencies will enable Members to:-

- A. engage with local residents, community groups, partners, businesses, private sector organisations, the voluntary, community and faith sector and Parish Councils particularly in relation to the Sefton 2030 vision for the borough; and
- B. in areas covered by Parish Councils, to work closely with such Parish Councils and the Sefton Area Partnership of Local Councils by promoting and enhancing the [Parish and Town Council Charter for Sefton](#)

This would aim to make sure what the Council and what others do are in the best interests of Sefton and its residents and has a

<p>contributing role to the 2030 vision of the borough</p> <p>Full details of Members' suggestions are contained in paragraph 6 and Appendix 3 of the Final Report.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p> <p>The implementation of the suggestions by Members will play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents and continuously improve the borough through the engagement of local residents, community groups, partners, businesses, private sector organisations, the voluntary, community and faith sector and Parish Councils in relation to the Sefton 2030 vision for the borough</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: Not applicable</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener: Not applicable</p>

Impact of the Proposals on Service Delivery:

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD 4769/17/17) has been involved throughout the review work.

The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD 4053/17) has been consulted and has no comments to add to the report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection

Introduction/Background

At its meeting held on 13 September 2016 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) approved the establishment of an Area Committees Working with the following Terms of Reference and Objectives:-

Review the findings of the public consultation exercise undertaken on the role of Area Committees, and the other issues set out in the report submitted to the Cabinet on 23 June 2016

Review modern methods of engagement between councils and their councillors and councillors and their communities, including the operation of community forums by other local authorities, the use of social media and guidance on its use

To consider whether a programme of communication training for members should be developed with particular emphasis on the social media aspects of modern communication in their role as 'Community Champions'

Review ways of communicating information about councillors' expenditure in their wards and associated decision making processes

To consider whether a system of escalation for the public where a councillor cannot be contacted, does not respond to contact or does not make themselves available for surgeries etc. can be developed

To consider whether methods for citizens to formally engage with its Council are made as simple and effective as possible through the provisions within the Council Constitution for petitions, questions attendance at meetings etc.

To consider how section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding would be spent in a revised Area Committee structure

To consider the remit of Area Committees

Accordingly, the Working Group has met on numerous occasions to undertake such review and its Final Report is attached. At its final meeting the Working Group considered submissions from Councillors Jamieson, McGuire and Thomas and such submissions are detailed in paragraph 6 and Appendix 3 of the Final Report. The Working Group recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet consider the submissions detailed in paragraph 6 and determine the most appropriate course of action thereon.

The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) will be reported to Cabinet on 5 October 2017.