

Area Committees procedure rules – Vale only

Purpose of the Area Committees

1. The Council may appoint Area Committees as it sees fit, if it is satisfied that to do so will ensure improved service delivery in the context of best value and more efficient, transparent and accountable decision making.
2. The council will consult with relevant parish and town councils and the chairmen of relevant parish meetings, when considering whether and how to establish Area Committees.
3. The chairmen and vice-chairmen of the Area Committees will be appointed at the annual council meeting, or by the relevant committee if a vacancy arises.

Membership, terms of reference and delegation

MEMBERSHIP

4. Area Committees shall cover the whole of the district with the membership of each being composed of all district councillors for the relevant area.
5. No political balance is necessary.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

6. The Area Committees shall have the following roles and functions:
 - (a) To promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and incur expenditure for that aim within limits agreed by the Cabinet;
 - (b) To receive reports and take decisions on matters delegated to the Area Committee by the Cabinet in line with council policies or by the Council;
 - (c) To submit reports on matters of concern to the Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees;
 - (d) Question members of the Cabinet as required in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects relevant to the Area Committee; and
 - (e) To determine any other matters delegated to Area Committees by the Council.

Access to information

7. Area Committees will comply with the access to information rules as set out in the protocol on councillor and officer relations in part 3 of this constitution.

Cabinet members on Area Committees

8. A member of the Cabinet may serve on an Area Committee, if eligible to do so as a district councillor.

Time and place of meetings

9. The time and place of meetings will be notified in the agenda for each meeting. Area Committee meetings will take place in accordance with an agreed programme. In addition, extra meetings may be scheduled as required.

Notice of, and agenda for, meetings

10. The head of legal and democratic will give notice to the public of the time and place of any meeting. At least five clear working days before a meeting, the head of legal and democratic will publish the agenda on the council's website and make it available for public inspection at the council's offices, except where the matter under consideration contains confidential or exempt information. The agenda will set out the date, time and location of the meeting, and will specify the business to be transacted. The agenda may contain reports about matters for the Committee's consideration. Where not all reports are available with the agenda they will be published as soon as they become available. Area Committee agendas will also be available for six years after a meeting.

Chairing meetings

11. The chair (and vice-chair in their absence), will preside over meetings and lead and guide the work of the committees. The chair may choose to indicate how they wish to be addressed, according to personal preference.

Substitutes

12. There are no substitutes at Area Committees.

Quorum

13. A quarter of the members of the committee must be present for a legally valid committee meeting to be held. During any meeting, if the chair counts the number of councillors present and declares there is not a quorum present, then the meeting will adjourn immediately. Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the chair. If he/she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next meeting.
14. If there is no quorum at the published start time for the meeting, a period of 15 minutes will be allowed. If there remains no quorum at the expiry of this period, the meeting shall be declared null and void. The business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the chair. If he/she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next meeting.

Duration of meetings

15. No meeting shall exceed two and a half hours in duration unless the committee, prior to the expiry of the period, vote for the meeting to continue for a further period not exceeding 30 minutes. Remaining business will be considered at the next meeting.

Voting

MAJORITY

16. Any matter will be decided by a simple majority of those councillors voting and present in the room at the time the question was put.

CHAIR'S CASTING VOTE

17. If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the chair will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the chair chooses to exercise a casting vote. If the chair does not exercise his/her casting vote, the motion being considered will be deemed to be lost.

SHOW OF HANDS

18. Unless a recorded vote is requested under rule 19, the chair will take the vote by show of hands, or if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

RECORDED VOTE

19. If three councillors present at the meeting request it, the names of those voting for and against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes. If a recorded vote is requested, the vote shall be taken alphabetically.

RIGHT TO REQUIRE INDIVIDUAL VOTE TO BE RECORDED

20. Where any councillor requests it immediately after the vote is taken, their vote will be so recorded in the minutes to show whether they voted for or against the motion or abstained from voting.

Public participation

21. The public may address Area Committee meetings by asking a question, making a statement or presenting a petition. Every question, statement or petition must relate to an agenda item for that meeting, or must relate to a matter that specifically, and wholly or mainly, affects the area. (District wide matters, which are not on the agenda, should be addressed to an appropriate committee with a remit to cover the entire district).
22. Any person may address the Area Committee for up to three minutes, providing they have first registered to do so by 5.00pm on the working day before the committee meeting by contacting democratic services:
democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk.
23. The public address session, on matters which are not about grant applications, will be limited to fifteen minutes. Where the number of speakers exceeds the time available, each speakers' time will be reduced.
24. Questions or statements will be considered by the Area Committee in the order that they are registered with democratic services. Speakers relating to items not on the agenda will be heard at the beginning of the meeting. Speakers relating to items on the agenda, will be heard with that item. Where multiple questions or statements are

received from different people on the same subject, the chair may group these together.

25. The chair of the Area Committee meeting may reject a question or statement if he/she considers it to be defamatory, frivolous or offensive, or if it is substantially the same as a question or statement put to a Cabinet, Council or committee meeting in the past six months, (except in the case of grant applications) or if it requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
26. Area Committee members may ask questions of clarification of the speaker.
27. The chair of the meeting may suspend the operation of speaking rules at any time if he/she considers it necessary for the purpose of maintaining order.

Minutes

28. The chair will sign the minutes of the proceedings at the next suitable meeting. The chair will move that the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record. Only the accuracy of the minutes may be discussed.

Record of attendance

29. All councillors present must sign the attendance list provided at the meeting.

Exclusion of the public

30. The public and press may only be excluded from attending an Area Committee meeting for the consideration of confidential or exempt business or under rules 36 and 37 (disturbance by the public).

Councillors' conduct

31. If more than one councillor speaks, the chair will ask one to speak. Other councillors must remain silent whilst a councillor is speaking unless they wish to make a point of order or a point of personal explanation.

CHAIR SPEAKING

32. When the chair speaks during a debate, any councillor speaking at the time must stop.

COUNCILLOR NOT TO BE HEARD FURTHER

33. If a councillor persistently disregards the ruling of the chair by behaving improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs business, the chair may move that the councillor be not heard further. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

COUNCILLOR TO LEAVE THE MEETING

34. If the councillor continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the chair may move that either the councillor leaves the meeting or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. If seconded, the motion will be voted on without discussion.

GENERAL DISTURBANCE

35. If there is a general disturbance making orderly business impossible, the chair may adjourn the meeting for as long as he/she thinks necessary.

Disturbance by the public

REMOVAL OF A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

36. If a member of the public interrupts the meeting, the chair will invite the person to stop. If they continue to interrupt, the chair will order their removal from the meeting room.

CLEARANCE OF PART OF THE MEETING ROOM

37. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the chair may call for that part to be cleared and if necessary, adjourn the meeting for as long as he/she thinks necessary.