

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee procedure rules

Purpose of the committee

1. The committee has specific responsibility to undertake community governance reviews and to determine other electoral issues as set out below:
 - To make recommendations to Council on reviews of electoral arrangements for the district undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
 - To undertake parish community governance reviews.
 - To respond to consultations from the Boundary Commission on reviews of parliamentary constituencies and county divisions within the district.
 - To undertake reviews of polling districts and polling places.
 - To consider reports from the Returning Officer on district and parish council elections.

Membership

2. The committee will comprise six councillors appointed annually by Council and will be politically balanced. The Council will appoint substitutes with an equivalent political balance. No member of the Cabinet, nor the chair or the vice-chair of Council shall act as chair or vice-chair of the committee.

Time and place of meetings

3. The time and place of meetings will be notified in the agenda for each meeting. The 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

4. 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. Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee agendas will also be available for six years after a meeting.

Chairing meetings

5. The chair (or vice-chair in their absence), appointed by Annual Council each year, or by the committee if a vacancy arises, will preside over meetings and lead and guide

the work of the committee. The chair may choose to indicate how they wish to be addressed, according to personal preference.

Substitutes

6. The council will appoint the same number of preferred substitutes in respect of each political group as that group holds ordinary seats on the committee. Each political group will be entitled to up to a maximum of three named substitutes where it has fewer than three members on the committee. A political group need not appoint to all available substitute places.
7. Substitute members will have all the powers and duties of any ordinary member of the committee but will not be able to exercise any special powers or duties exercisable by the person they are substituting. These powers and duties will only be attained by the substitute members from the start until the close of the meeting at which they are substituting.
8. Substitute members may attend meetings:
 - to take the place of the ordinary member for whom they are the substitute;
 - where the ordinary member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
 - after notifying the head of legal and democratic before the start of the meeting.
9. Where possible, absent members must be substituted by a preferred substitute who has been named, but where this is not possible any member of the same political group may act as a substitutes.

Quorum

10. 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.
11. 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

12. 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.

Meeting procedure

13. The committee shall consider the following business:

- (a) To receive any apologies and notifications of substitutes;
- (b) Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests;
- (c) Minutes of the previous meeting; and
- (d) The business otherwise set out on the agenda for the meeting.

Voting

MAJORITY

14. 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

15. 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

16. Unless a recorded vote is requested under rule 17, the chair will take the vote by show of hands, or if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

RECORDED VOTE

17. 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 AN INDIVIDUAL VOTE TO BE RECORDED

18. 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

19. The public may address a committee meeting 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. Public questions, statements or petitions will only be accepted at a special meeting of the committee if they relate to the item due to be discussed at that meeting.
20. An application to speak must be made in writing or by email to democratic services democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk by 5.00 pm on the last working day before the day of the meeting. Persons who have registered to speak may appoint someone to speak on their behalf provided that written authority from the person who has registered to speak is given to democratic services before the meeting commences.

21. The public address session will be limited to fifteen minutes. No address shall exceed three minutes. Where the number of speakers exceeds the time available, each speaker's time will be reduced.
22. Questions or statements will be considered by the meeting in the order that they are registered with democratic services. Where multiple questions or statements are received from different people on the same subject, the chair may group these together. There is no provision to ask a supplementary question.
23. If an answer cannot be given to a question at a meeting, a written answer will be provided.
24. 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

25. 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

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

Exclusion of the public

27. The public and press may only be excluded from attending a committee meeting for the consideration of confidential or exempt business or under rule 33 and 34 (disturbance by the public).

Councillors' conduct

28. 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

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

COUNCILLOR NOT TO BE HEARD FURTHER

30. 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

31. 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

32. 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 MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

33. 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 MEETING ROOM

34. 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.

Attendance by other district councillors at meetings

35. Any councillor may attend a meeting of the committee. With the consent of the chair he/she may speak, but not vote, on any item on the agenda for the meeting.