To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

STATUTORY AREA COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   This report provides Members with information about Statutory Area Committees in terms of their composition and functions, including examples of the various models adopted by other Local Authorities. It also offers Members an opportunity to consider the merits of establishing some form of Area Committee structure in Doncaster in the future.

RECOMMENDATION

2.   That members consider and comment upon the different models of Area Committees outlined in Appendix 1 to this report and decide whether Doncaster Council should consider the establishment of Area Committees as part of its committee structure.

BACKGROUND

3.   At its meeting held on 10th July 2012, in discussing its Work Programme for 2012/13, this Committee requested that a report be brought to a future meeting on the role that Statutory Area Committees can play in local authority decision making.

4.   The Local Government Act 2000 allows a local authority to create Area Committees and arrange for the discharge of Executive and non-Executive functions by them.

Benefits Area Committees can bring

5.   Area Committees can bring the following benefits:

•   Decision-making is closer to communities;

•   Help to give communities a say on local issues;

•   Help develop area community strategies as part of wider community plans.

Membership of Area Committees

6.   Area Committees do not need to be politically balanced and can include voting members who are not members of the Local Authority. Membership can include:

- Elected Members (whose electoral divisions are in the area);
- Parish/Town Councillors;
- Representatives of public/private sector organisations in the area;
- Representatives of voluntary sector organisations in the area;
- Members of the public.

7.   With regard to geographical options for area committees, a sensible approach would be to base these on the Council's existing area management model which operates across the Borough, i.e. split into the five areas of North, East, South, West and Central. These five areas are aligned to the 21 Electoral Wards.

Remit and Powers of Area Committees

8.   Can be advisory, consultative or have decision making powers. Should the Council consider introducing Area Committees in the future, the Council will determine within the Terms of Reference what functions and powers are to be delegated. It should be noted that this applies to Council-side functions only. If it so chooses, the Executive can also delegate functions to Area Committees. If the Council was minded to adopt area committees, it would be a matter for the Elected Mayor to decide on the extent to which any Executive functions were to be delegated to Area Committees. The details of any such delegation would be included in the Mayor's Scheme of Delegations (as set out in Part 3.7 of the Council's Constitution).

9.   Set out at Appendix 1 to this report, for Members' information, are examples of the various types of Area Committee models and structures that have been adopted by local authorities elsewhere.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

10.   The various options with regard to the make-up and functions of Area Committees are set out in the main body of this report. Should the Council agree to establish Area Committees in the future, more detailed options in terms of their membership, specific functions, size of budgets to be allocated and cost implications would be brought back for Members' consideration.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

11.   The report impacts on the Council's key priorities as follows:

Priority Theme	Mayor's Top 10 Priorities	Implications of this initiative
Creating a strong, connected and inclusive economy	• Improve Doncaster's economy	

Priority Theme	Mayor's Top 10 Priorities	Implications of this initiative
Creating a strong, connected and inclusive economy (continued)	• Regenerate Doncaster's Town Centres • Give people choice in transport	
Developing stronger communities		• Addressing the perception in communities that people cannot influence decisions that affect their local area, giving people a voice about local issues and encouraging communities to get involved in local decision making. • Empowering local Ward Members by involving them in local decision making.
Increasing and improving housing	• Increase affordable housing and build Council houses	
Protecting and improving all our children's lives	• Improve services for children and young people • Improve education and skills across the Borough	
Improving health and support for independent lives	• Ensure people in need of adult social care receive a timely and appropriate service	
Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)	• Reduce crime and end all forms of ASB	
Creating a cleaner and better environment	• Protect the environment from inappropriate development, decay and architectural vandalism	
Internal Transformation (Including the Council's Recovery Programme)	• Ensure local people get value for money from Council services	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

12.   There are no specific risks associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13.   Sections 18 to 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 provide flexibility in the way that functions which are the responsibility of the Executive may be carried out. Specifically, Section 18 of the Act allows an Executive to discharge its functions through an Area Committee. Under the Local Government Act 2000, Areas Committees could only be established if the following conditions were met:

a) the members of the Area Committee were Ward Members for the area covered by the Committee;
b) the part of the area of the Authority which the Area Committee covered did not exceed two-fifths of the total area of the Authority;
c) the population of that part did not exceed two-fifths of the total population of the Borough.

The Localism Act 2011 has lifted the above constraints and there is now greater freedom with regard to determining Area Committee memberships and geographical areas.

14.   Non-Executive Committees are governed by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 (as amended).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15.   There are no specific financial implications associated with this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
Rotherham	Leader and Cabinet	63 Councillors	7 Area Assemblies (Meet at least 6 times a year)	Ward Councillors, partners and community representatives	Develop a single area plan that is recognised by all agencies operating in the Assembly's area. Set local delivery targets and monitor progress towards these targets. Consider issues of local concern and submit reports to the Cabinet, Scrutiny etc.	Consider funding proposals for the expenditure of devolved budgets submitted to the Area Assembly by a Co-ordinating Group.	
Barnsley	Leader and Cabinet	63 Councillors	Currently considering establishing 6 Area Councils as Area Committees of the Executive. (6 meetings per year) Area Councils will be supported by 21 Ward Alliances.	**Area Councils:** Elected Members for the area. **Ward Alliances:** Local Ward Members	Proposed **Area Councils** will have the following key functions: • Setting local priorities • Local budget and commissioning decisions • Influencing Borough-wide service planning • Requesting reports in relation to area based service activity • New local focus on Scrutiny • Dealing with Councillor Calls for Action • Local consultation and public engagement	To be determined for Area, but Area Budget allocations will be proportionate to the size of the relevant Area Council.	

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
					(Note: Will not perform any regulatory functions, such as Licensing or Planning) **Ward Alliances** will perform the following functions: • Determine Ward priorities • Develop community activity to help address local priorities • Allocation of small budget within the Ward to support local community activity (Not public meetings)		
Sheffield	Leader and Cabinet	84 Councillors (28 Wards)	7 Community Assemblies – Quarterly formal meetings open to members of the public who can ask questions and submit petitions Additional informal 'You Say' and You Choose' sessions where communities can develop ideas.	Local Ward Councillors	Make executive decisions on local priorities, budgets and service levels together with commissioning activity. Develop own Community Plan	Each Community Assembly has a budget to spend on local projects. Communities influence decisions on how much is spent on parks, street cleaning and libraries.	£7,509.32 for the Chair

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
Oldham	Leader and Cabinet	59 Councillors	6 District Partnerships covering 3/4 wards each. Each District Partnership has a Finance Sub-Committee with responsibility for all financial matters relating to the Partnership.	Elected Members for the wards comprising the District Partnership, plus non-voting partner representatives.	District Partnerships make decisions on strategic priorities for each area, including: • Taking decisions about funding or other resources delegated to them by Council; • Developing and approving District Plans; • Community engagement and consultation role.	Each financial year the Cabinet devolves each District Partnership an annual budget in the range of £105-130,000.	
Pendle Borough Council	Leader and Cabinet	49 Councillors	5 Area Committees (meet monthly) Public question time, receipt of petitions; planning matters; financial matters; highways matters; miscellaneous items	Local Ward councillors, plus some town and parish councillors	**Decision Making Powers** Non-Executive Functions: Deal with Planning applications and enforcement; Public Rights of Way Executive functions: Make appointments to local outside bodies; allocate and oversee management of Area Committee's Capital budget; car parking and highways issues; Miscellaneous: oversee the operation of public services; make recommendations for compulsory purchase orders in respect of unfit and vacant private sector housing		

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
South Somerset	Leader and Executive	60 Councillors	4 Area Committees meet monthly. Meetings divided into 2 parts – planning applications and other business. Rules apply to allow members of the public to speak on planning applications	District Councillors in each area.	**Decision making powers:** Non-Executive Functions: Take decisions on significant planning applications within their area. Invest in local projects, discuss issues of interest and priority to local area. Executive Functions: Local grant giving. Responsible for area budget. Manage local regeneration projects within financial limits	Limited resource allocated from Council main budget to help support investments into local priorities	
Stockport MBC	Leader and Cabinet	63 Councillors (21 wards)	7 Area Committees	Councillors for that area.	Deal with certain types of planning applications. Consider applications from local groups and organisations for funding for various projects	£3,000 to each ward to fund community group requests	
Sefton MBC	Leader and Cabinet	66 councillors (22 wards)	7 Area Committees	Councillors for each particular area	**Open Forum:** consultation and engagement; **Decision making:** transport, planning and environmental matters		

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
Leicester City Council	Mayor and Cabinet	54 (22 wards) 2 or 3 members in each	Community meetings (replaced area committees in 2008) meet approximately quarterly. Part 1 – formal items, part 2 – community input; part 3 – budget (support grant requests)	Councillors for the Ward	Non decision making but assess and support grant applications		
Birmingham City	Leader and Cabinet	120 councillors (40 wards)	40 Ward committees 10 District Commmittees	Ward Committees Councillors for the Ward. District Committees Chaired by Executive Member. Elected members and up to 5 non-voting partner representatives (co-optees).	Ward Committees are mainly consultative - responsible for engaging with local residents and community groups, but they do agree projects via Community Chest funding. District Committees are strategic bodies with significant resource responsibilities. They deliver key Executive functions including Housing Management, Youth Services and Adult Education and Council-side functions, such as refuse, street cleansing and parks.	Cabinet has delegated functions, operational powers and duties up to a maximum financial limit of £500,000 (Revenue).	

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council *how many councillors and wards*	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
Sunderland City	Leader and Cabinet	75 councillors (25 Wards)	5 Area Committees (based on the Council's 5 Regeneration Areas)	Ward Councillors within each Committee's area.	Consultative role, report on matters of local concern to Cabinet, O&S committees and the Council. Allocate small grants.	Receives area based grant to support delivery of local priorities as agreed through Local Area Plan	£6,277 for the Chair
Bristol	Leader and Cabinet (but Mayoral election planned for November)	70 Councillors (35 Wards, 2 councillors in each)	14 Neighbourhood Committees	Ward members	Delegated power to take certain local decisions.		
North Yorkshire County Council	Leader and Executive	72 councillors	7 Area Committees (one for each of the 7 Districts (meet approximately 5 times a year)	County Councillors representing each electoral division. Power to co-opt additional members who are typically representatives of the District Council and Parish Councils in that area.	Promote key local strategies and overview the effectiveness of public services in their area; make and enforce street byelaws and Orders, deal with a range of highways matters.	Currently no budget for small grants	£3,088 for the Chair
Haringey			Area Committee (preceded by forum) Meet up to 4 times a year.	Ward councillors for the area			

Name of Council	Governance arrangements	size of Council _how many councillors and wards_	Meeting Type	Membership	Delegated Powers	Allocated budget	SRA
London Borough of Hounslow	Leader and Executive	20 wards 60 elected councillors	Area Forum (previously called Area Committees) Meet 6 times a year in the evening	Ward councillors for the area; up to 3 people can be co-opted on to the committee but they have no vote.	Monitors local service provision including planning and highway related matters; Monitors services delivered by the Council and other agencies in the area; Provides an opportunity for local decision-making on local issues; Provides an opportunity for residents to ask questions on any local matter and comment on consultations and initiatives; Considers petitions submitted to the council by local residents.	Budget for running expenses, publicity and small grants for community groups	£6,400 for the Chair £2,500 for the Vice Chair (to carry out role of Community Champion
London Borough of Hounslow (continued)					Allocates Section 106 monies and hearing from members of the public how this might be spent. These are monies from developers which may be used for local improvements; Determines the allocation of grants to local voluntary organisations from the Area Committee Small Grants Fund.		