South of the Borough Neighbourhood Committee
8 October 2015

Neighbourhood Working Arrangements
Report by the Head of Corporate Governance

Purpose
To enable the Committee to determine arrangements for managing its business for the remainder of the municipal term.

Recommendations
To Resolve that -

1. the arrangements for public participation set out in paragraphs 6-10 be agreed, subject to any changes the Committee may wish to make;

2. the theme and outline for the first Community Forum (attached at Annex 2) be agreed, subject to any amendments the Committee may wish to make; and

3. licensing matters be dealt with at the Neighbourhood Committee meeting wherever possible, but when necessary a Licensing Sub-Committee be established to deal with particular cases which arise.

The Committee is also invited to consider any additional changes it may wish to make to its working arrangements

Key Points

A. Council agreed in July 2015 a revised focus for Neighbourhood Committees and amended Terms of Reference. The new remit of the Committees is attached in full at Annex 1 and the main changes are summarised in paragraph 2 of the report.

B. Within the constitutional framework, Neighbourhood Committees decide their own arrangements for chairing, public participation at meetings and determine how they deal with regulatory functions within their responsibilities – eg street café and sexual entertainment licences. The aim of the arrangements is to enable Committees to work effectively, enable public participation and avoid overly long agendas and meetings.

C. At the beginning of each four year Municipal term it is customary for each Neighbourhood Committee to review its working arrangements. However, given the governance changes agreed by Council in July 2015, it is appropriate to now review and amend the working arrangements for the remainder of the municipal term.

Context

1. During 2014-15 and the early part of the 2015-16 municipal year, Neighbourhood Committees operated under the following arrangements:

   ● Kingston Town and Maldens and Coombe operated a Planning Sub-Committee to determine the planning matters within the responsibilities of the Committee. The Sub Committees consisted of 2 Members from each ward. South of the Borough and Surbiton Neighbourhood Committees determined planning applications at their main Committee meetings.
● it has not been necessary to appoint any sub committees to deal with licensing matters.

● South of the Borough Neighbourhood Committee appointed two non voting community members.

2. Council agreed in July 2015 a revised focus for Neighbourhood Committees and amended Terms of Reference. The new remit of the Committees is attached in full at Annex 1 but the main changes are summarised below:

● the removal of responsibilities for the Youth Service and Libraries

● the restriction of powers over highways and traffic management schemes to those affecting single roads only - Neighbourhood Committees can continue to consider and propose schemes of wider application but these must be referred for approval to the new Residents Committee

● revisions to the neighbourhoods grants scheme due to come into effect for the 2016/17 financial year. Neighbourhood Grants will cease and will be replaced with Ward Funds, this will enable individual Members, through the relevant Neighbourhood Manager, to consider bids and award funds to community initiatives within their Ward or Neighbourhood.

● amendments to the Planning delegations - henceforth applications will be submitted to Neighbourhood Committees

  -for determination if the scheme is for no more than 10 units of accommodation and

  (a) either there are a minimum of 10 valid objections and the Chair has requested that the application be reported to Committee, or

  (b) or all relevant ward Members request that the application be submitted to Committee or

  (c) or at the request of the Chair and with the agreement of the Head of Planning and the Chair of the Development Control Committee.

  -for consultation if the scheme is a major planning applications and the Head of Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Chairs of Development Control and the relevant Neighbourhood Committee, considers it appropriate.

● specific direction to place a greater focus on community consultation, engagement and leadership, empowering the local communities and building capacity and resilience within them.

● encouragement to promote and support local health and public health provision, cultural, artistic and sporting initiatives and community assurance and cohesion. Responsibilities for the provision of policies and services within these areas remain with the relevant Strategic Committee.

3. As part of these changes, the number of dates set aside for Neighbourhood Committees in the calendar of meetings has been reduced from ten to eight, with three of these reserved for Community forums (see paragraph 9). As a consequence the establishment of separate Neighbourhood Sub-Committees in order to determine planning applications would present practical difficulties and is not envisaged. It is intended instead that planning applications will now be determined alongside regular business in each Neighbourhood. This is facilitated by
the modification of the circumstances in which planning applications may be referred to Neighbourhood meetings.

4. Neighbourhood Committees have responsibility for licensing functions covering street cafes, sexual entertainment venues, markets and street trading. It is proposed that, where possible, these are dealt with as part of the usual agenda. In complex/lengthy cases, a sub-committee could be established to deal with these.

5. As reported at the July meeting of Council, in order to streamline agendas and ensure that meetings can concentrate on matters for decision, information items and update reports for Strategic and Neighbourhood Committees will now in most cases be reported through a pack of information papers to be circulated regularly to all Members and published on the Council's website. Arrangements will be made to ensure that reports presented in this way can be referred to Committee by Members if required.

Public Participation

6. Participation by residents and other members of the public is encouraged. There are separate arrangements for speaking on planning applications which are explained in paragraph 11.

7. To date, the arrangements at all Neighbourhoods have been broadly similar and have been:
   - a 30 minute question and answer session at the start of the meeting. (Whilst advance notice of questions is encouraged, questions can be raised on the night.)
   - contributions during the debate on items at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.
   - the opportunity to present petitions at the start of the meeting (responses to these petitions are then provided at the next meeting where appropriate).

8. The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to make any changes to the existing arrangements.

9. In terms of Community Forums, it is anticipated that these will be open forums and as such no formal public participation arrangements will be required. In addition to Neighbourhood Members, membership of the forums will be open to co-opted neighbourhood based representative for key areas of local activities and public sector service providers. The Forums will be open to all neighbourhood residents to participate. The Neighbourhood Committee will annually appoint a Chair to manage the meetings and ensure that everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to participate.

10. The Committee may also appoint non-voting Advisory Members with appropriate expertise to assist it with its work in its formal decision making role. The number of Advisory Members must not be more than a third of the membership of the Committee.

Speaking on planning applications

11. The scheme for planning applications gives registered objectors and applicants the right to speak, in that order, for a maximum of five minutes each. If there is more than one person either objecting or supporting the application, then they will need to
share the five minutes or decide amongst themselves on a spokesperson. In addition, the Committee may ask questions of each side for a maximum of five minutes.

**Other Sub Committees/ Working Groups**

12. The Committee may establish small sub-committees/ working groups to deal with specific issues. Sub Committee members can only be drawn from the Neighbourhood Committee. An example is working parties of Councillors and residents to consider issues such as revitalisation schemes and/or traffic issues. These would meet as and when required.

**Community and Street Forums**

13. Changes to the Neighbourhood system agreed by Council in July 2015 include the provision of three themed Community Forums and up to two Street Forums per year, per ward. Due to the arrangements being agreed part way through the municipal year, it has only been possible to timetable two Community Forums in 2015-16, in addition the full complement of Street forums may not be reached.

14. Community Forums will provide the key focus for engagement, a local point of access to the Council for the community, and will enable Ward Members to act as community champions. The new format will allow flexibility and the ability to identify solutions to local needs, working together with the community to resolve issues. Community Forums will be themed around an area of concern to local people. Topics might, for example, include parks and open spaces, anti social behaviour, planning, policing, health, employment and environmental matters.

15. The proposed theme and outline for the first Community Forum is attached at Annex 2 to this report.

16. Community Forums have been scheduled to begin at 7:30pm, in line with other Council Committee meetings. The Committee could consider whether it would wish to hold any of the forum meetings in the daytime in order to provide opportunities for residents who have evening commitments to participate. It should be noted that daytime venues can be more difficult to secure. The use of social media to assist participation in the forums may need to be considered.

17. Ward based street forums will be held up to twice a year in each ward, the arrangements for each ward will be agreed between the Ward Councillors and Neighbourhood Manager. Street Forums will provide opportunity for residents across the Neighbourhood to engage at a local level, on their doorstep, on the streets and at pre existing community events as appropriate. Local Neighbourhood issues identified can then be fed into the Community Plan, passed to service areas for resolution or addressed at future Community Forums.

**Resource Implications**

18. Establishing other bodies such as working groups which meet on a regular basis places additional demands on Members and staff. These need to be borne in mind and a balance achieved in managing the volume of business efficiently, avoiding overload and, indeed, a proliferation of meetings which are poorly attended by residents.

19. The financial and environmental costs are hire of venues, audio support and setup, paper, printing, and postage. An additional Neighbourhood meeting costs an average of £1,700 including staff time associated with planning, engineering or other staff who may be required to provide reports/attend the meeting.
20. The venue and other associated costs of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings will be carried across to fund the Community Forum meetings. There is therefore no additional budget requirement or available resource for these meetings.

21. The current budget allocation does not include promotional costs and Neighbourhood Committees may need to set aside funds from any underspends to cover such costs.

22. The Neighbourhood Committee will receive confirmation of the revised budget allocations post the Neighbourhood changes and regular budget updates thereafter.

Legal Implications
23. None arising from this report.

Risk Assessment
24. Not required.

Equalities Considerations
25. Accessibility and suitability for those with disabilities or impairments are considered when selecting meeting venues. Large print copies of the agenda are available on request and audio recordings of the meeting are placed on the Council’s website for those unable to attend meetings.

Background papers – none

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