Area Committee

Handbook

2009 / 2010

Sunderland
City Council

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INTRODUCTION

The Area Committee Handbook provides practical guidance to everyone involved with Area Committees in Sunderland – Members of the Public, Elected Members, Service Delivery Partners and Council Officers. The guidance in the Handbook should be read alongside the Council's Constitution.

The Handbook includes protocols setting out the procedures and processes to help the business of the Area Committee run smoothly. While the Handbook supports the rules and procedures set out in the Council's Constitution (available on the Council's website **www.sunderland.gov.uk**) the Constitution will always take precedence over the Handbook.

> **Sunderland Strategy's Vision:**
> **"Creating a better future for everyone in Sunderland"**
> **Sunderland will be a welcoming, internationally recognised city where people have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a healthy, safe and prosperous future.**

This is the vision and aspiration for the whole of the city of Sunderland. In order to reach this ambition the City is working together with its partners by developing and implementing the Sunderland Strategy. It is now looking at how this can be locally implemented and has reviewed its Local Area governance structures to improve links between the City's strategic actions and its local priorities.

The Sunderland Strategy sets out how the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) will deliver the City's vision, but it is the Local Area Committees that will deliver an area vision, which local elected Members, local Residents, Service Delivery Partners, Council Officers and voluntary and community groups will drive and implement. The process is two way and focussed on the operation *"What can the city do for an area and what can an area do for the city?"*

The purpose of the Local Area Plans (LAPs) is to make sense of how our key themes are turned into reality and practical action for people in their areas. Our key themes are:-

- A Prosperous area
- A Learning area
- A Safe area
- A Healthy area
- An Attractive and Inclusive area

These aims are underpinned by four cross cutting priorities: Inclusive Communities, Culture, Housing and Communication.

Underpinning the Sunderland Strategy is the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Sunderland and LAPs for the five regeneration areas in the City (all with a lifespan until 2011). They set out the basis on which we will move towards our vision by identifying the focus for the relative short term and the next steps in the journey towards achieving long term aspirations.

We recognise the LAP does not set out everything that needs to be done in the Area. Rather it highlights the agreed way forward for the Area Committee in respect of the identified improvement priorities and intentions over the forthcoming years.

BACKGROUND OF THE AREA COMMITTEE

The Cabinet meeting of the Council is the executive decision making body, and has delegated powers to an area level, via Area Committees to make a range of formal decisions on local service delivery, if it is seen to bring benefit to local communities, bringing on board local views to shape and influence decisions around local solutions to local problems. When good practice occurs there are opportunities to influence policy development and strategic decision making by the Cabinet and the LSP. Area Committee will also monitor service delivery and performance of all City Council services in local areas.

Area Committees are formal committees appointed by the Council to ensure improved service delivery in the context of best value and more efficient, transparent and accountable decision making. The Area Committee's governance arrangements have been updated to support the delivery of the Sunderland Strategy and LAA at a local level, in addition to the Council's continuous improvement agenda and complying with emerging legislation in relation to Community Leadership, enhanced scrutiny arrangements, 'Councillor Call for Action' powers, 'Duty to Involve' and 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power'.

The aim of Area Committee is to strengthen local democratic accountability through empowering locally elected Members to take decisions, shape and influence the delivery of local public sector services in local areas.

ROLE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE

- To lead on the development of a Local Area Plan.
- To review, problem solve and establish the most effective operation of responsive front line services.
- To maximise the engagement of local residents and other interests in decision making on matters which affect them.

Their remit will involve all locally delivered statutory services, enabling locally elected Members to exercise a much broader influence over activity in the public sector.

Each Area Committee has its Strategic Initiatives Budget and through to 2011, its Strategic Investment Programme to manage. However, not all service decisions/budgets can be devolved to the Local Area Committee because some budgets:-

- Are allocated according to Sunderland-wide criteria often in response to national requirements.
- Need to support service delivery patterns and different partner organisations outside local government.
- Need to be retained at the centre to support strategic service delivery to maximise economies of scale and efficiency.

The Area Committee will monitor the local impact of all public services.

Meetings of the Area Committee will be open to the press and public.

From the 1st April 2009, local authorities have a duty to involve 'representatives of local persons', making it standard practice for a local authority and their partners to empower and engage local people through the delivery of local services and involvement in local decision making. Area Committees will inform local residents about services, policies and decisions

affecting them and they will also be able to have their say and get involved in decisions, where appropriate.

Information will be easy to access, understand and tailored, as appropriate, to different audiences to support involvement, being aware of the equality requirements.   Area Committees will support genuine opportunities for people to have their say, e.g. satisfaction surveys (Place Survey) and direct dialogue (Questions to Area Committee).

Area Committees recognise that the most effective form of engagement is 'involvement'; influencing or directly participating in decision making at this level which is promoted, for example, through getting involved in Community Spirit and Independent Advisory Groups.

The Area Committee will provide the local context for the Sunderland Strategy.   The extended representation at Area Committee has been drawn together to account for local and strategic knowledge and will provide for overall consistency, yet give each Area Committee significant flexibility within approved Council policies and budgets to respond to local circumstances and priorities.

The Council will assess the opportunities for extending the remit of the Area Committee to support new policy initiatives, for example, integral to the Area Committee is the agreed Sunderland Compact which aims to improve partnership working.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

Area Committees are open to the public. Each agenda is available five working days before the date of the meeting. These can be obtained from Democratic Services at the Civic Centre or online at **http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Committees/CMISWebPublic**.

Meetings are held on a regular basis throughout the year on an evening usually within the local area, allowing those with daytime commitments to come along and encouraging local attendance.

For the Area Committee to have the information it needs to carry out its role, it may require the attendance of members from the LSP, the relevant Portfolio Holder, Executive Director, or any senior officer to provide evidence or information on reasonable notice. To make sure that the Committee can carry out its business effectively, it is the duty of an officer of the Council to attend if asked to do so by the Committees.

It is intended that both elected Members and Service Delivery Partners should see the process as a partnership.

The work of the Area Committee is extremely varied and may involve making decisions, being involved in consultations and responding to questions from the public.   Elected Members are expected to make a declaration of any interest that is known to them at the start of the meeting in the usual way, indicating whether it is a personal, or a personal and prejudicial interest and how the interest arises.   It may also be necessary for elected Members to make an interest known if it arises during the course of the meeting, and where necessary leave the room whilst decisions are made.

To ensure the smooth running of the meeting each Member should consider, when reading the agenda in preparation, whether any interests are likely to arise and seek advice well in advance of the meeting from the Democratic Services Officer.

Process

Other representatives on the Local Area Committee are not Public Appointments and are not elected by local residents to represent an Area, unlike elected Members.

The appointment of representatives to Local Area Committees will be annually reviewed, by approaching the LSP and Directorates to seek nominations to Area Committees.

Elected Members will receive all nominations and discuss and agree representatives for the following municipal year, at the last meeting of the current municipal year. Elected Members have the right to approve new nominations throughout the municipal year, if a theme has no representative and can also call on experts to attend the Area Committee for specific topics and issues when relevant.

Period of appointment

- Elected Members for four years.
- Non Elected representatives for one municipal year.

Substitutes

- There is currently no formal mechanism for the nomination of substitutes, although it is recognised that some Service Delivery Partners may send substitutes on an ad hoc basis.

Voting Rights

To date, Sunderland City Council has given no non elected Member voting rights. The right to vote at Area Committee remains with elected Members only.

- Elected Members have a mandate to speak on behalf of the public, where representatives do not.
- The non elected representatives are there to provide a level of expertise or knowledge to help inform the debate.

Principles of Conduct

- All elected Members are required to be bound by the Code of Conduct in the Council's Constitution which sets out rules complying with the Principles of Conduct in Public Life.
- Under the Council's Constitution non elected representatives without voting rights must agree to be bound in honour by the Code of Conduct.

Training

The Council provides an ongoing programme of training seminars for Members and others involved with the Area Committees, which provide them with the background information they need to deal with a range of issues pertinent to the work of the Committees.

Declarations

Representatives who sit on Area Committees will be asked:-

- If there is any membership or position that might affect their ability to act in the best interests of the City of Sunderland, or to declare any other conflict of interest. In some cases, such interests may be incompatible with membership of the Committee, where they would clearly conflict or are in organisations that demand a level of loyalty that might not be consistent with a role on the Committee.

- To sign up to supporting and working towards the City Strategy and Vision and to making a contribution of time, and where agreed to meet joint organisational aims, of finance.

- To supply information about themselves to ensure Area Committees are able to monitor the diversity and coverage of the City.

Elected Members will declare an interest if they have an existing relationship with any representatives. It is accepted that it is highly likely that such relationships will exist. It will be up to the Committee to take advice and decide whether such a relationship should require the representative to withdraw from the Committee and be replaced by another representative.

MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR AREA COMMITTEE

At the heart of Area Committee is the principle that the process is elected Member led and all Service Delivery Partners and Local Residents have an important role in identifying local priorities to improve upon and solutions that will make those improvements.

Each Area Committee is made up of elected Members, local Service Delivery Partners and key stakeholders.

Chair
The Chair will:-

- Support the Committee in developing Local Area Plans to improve the quality of life in the area
- Manage the Committee agenda and ensure that Committee representatives understand their roles and abilty to contribute to the meeting
- Welcome and introduce all representatives on the Committee.
- Encourage relevant discussion at Committee to ensure a full and meaningful debate of the issues discussed.
- Ensure meetings are non partisan and free of party political debate.
- Provide a focal point to ask questions and encourage questions to be brought forward at the meeting through the Chair, controlling discussion and ensuring all Committee members have an opportunity to ask questions and debate an item.
- Bring clarity by summarising what has been agreed and what the next steps are.
- Manage the voting system and have the casting vote.
- When necessary, delegate work appropriately amongst the Committee.
- Handle conflict during meetings, to arrive at constructive outcomes.
- Be the spokesperson for the Committee and present and champion the Committee findings and recommendations.

Vice Chair
The Vice Chair plays an important part in the role of the Committee and will:-

- Take up the role of chairing and managing meetings in the absence of the Chair.
- Play a lead role in the development and implementation of Local Area Plans.
- Co-chair Area Network meetings with a Voluntary and Community Sector representative.

Elected Members
Members of the Council representing those wards included within each Area Committee boundary will endeavour to attend each Area Committee meeting.

Elected Members as Community Leaders will:-

- Act as honest brokers or intermediaries between citizen, community, the Council and external partners.
- Take action to improve the quality of life of people in their communities.
- Act as champions and representatives of each and every resident.
- Investigate and resolve residents' problems effectively or explain to them why they cannot be solved.
- Be well informed, know their area and be clear about local priorities.

Elected Members in a corporate role will:-

- Be effective ambassadors for the Council in their communities.
- Reflect the community's feedback and views in the Council decision making processes to make policies and services more responsive.
- Make objective and informed decisions that balance local needs and priorities with those of the wider area or City.
- Represent the Council's interests in local partnership working.
- Act in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Local Strategic Partnership Representation

Identified Service Delivery Partners, who currently sit on both LSP Delivery Improvement Boards and Area Committees, will be responsible for providing updates on Area Committees to the individual Delivery and Improvement Partnership and vice versa, thus making connections with LSP work.

Representation will be from the five Delivery and Improvement Partnerships:

Healthy City
Prosperous City
Safer City
Learning City
Attractive and Inclusive City

Representatives from the Delivery and Improvement Partnerships will be of Senior Management level or equivalent and will be able to speak for their Delivery and Improvement Partnership and be prepared to commit resources on behalf of their partnership. If an individual is unable to attend a meeting a named substitute will be invited to attend in their absence.

They will:-

- Support the delivery of LAPs.
- Support work to maximise the effectiveness of responsive front line services.
- Participate fully in resulting problem solving and service review exercises.
- Co-ordinate a positive response from their Delivery and Improvement Partnership to discussions on matters of public interest.
- Support efforts to maximise the engagement of local residents and other interests in decision making on matters which affect them.

Delivery and Improvement Partnership responsibilities:-

- Representation at the appropriate level of authority and experience.
- Consistently high levels of attendance.
- Provide a two way flow of information between the Area Committee and the Delivery and Improvement Partnership.
- High level knowledge of the service area and its strategic operating context.
- Commitment to improving the quality of life and satisfaction of residents in the Area.
- Commitment to promote the interest of the Area in decision making processes within their partnership.
- Commitment to engagement through involvement and feedback from local residents in the design, delivery and improvement of services.
- Commitment to constructive challenge and proactive service improvement.
- Objectivity in accessing issues and opportunities and how to approach these in the best interests of the Area.
- Acceptance of Area Committee behaviour protocols.

Service Delivery Partners

Area Committees have asked representatives of external service delivery organisations to attend their Area Committees, recognising the important contribution which they make to shaping and delivering local area priorities.

Each Area Committee has core partner representatives from the following organisations:-

- Gentoo;
- Northumbria Police;
- NHS – Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust;
- Sunderland City College;
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service;
- The Voluntary and Community Sector.

Representatives of service delivery partners will be of Senior Management level or equivalent and therefore be able to speak for their organisation and be prepared to commit resources on behalf of their organisations, and in their absence a named substitute will be invited.

They will:-

- Support the delivery of LAPs.
- Support work to maximise the effetiveness of responsive front line services.
- Participate fully in resulting problem solving and service review exercises.
- Co-ordinate a positive response from their organisation to discussions on matters of public interest.
- Support efforts to maximise the engagement of local residents and other interests in decision making on matters which affect them.

Service Delivery Partners Responsibilities

- Representation at the appropriate level of authority and experience.
- Consistently high levels of attendance.
- High level knowledge of the service area and its strategic operating context.
- Commitment to improving the quality of life and satisfaction of residents in the Area.
- Commitment to promote the interest of the Area in decision making processes within their organisations.
- Commitment to engagement, involvement and feedback with local residents in the design, delivery and improvement of services.
- Commitment to constructive challenge and proactive service improvement.
- Objectivity in accessing issues and opportunities and how to approach these in the best interests of the Area.
- Acceptance of Area Committee behaviour protocols.

Core Council Officers Responsibilities

- Discuss, review, challenge and promote the identified priorities of the LAP.
- Take an active role in owning and solving problems identified at Area Committee.
- Recognise information sharing is a two way process, by bringing information to Area Committee from Residents, Community Groups, elected Members, Scrutiny and the LSP.
- Think strategically and commit to the development of improving outcomes.
- Provide direction and co-ordinate the approach to all priorities across neighbourhoods, wards and the area.
- Encourage participation and involvement from local residents, bringing forward views and opinions on service delivery.

- Work with key contacts and stakeholders to create and build appropriate networks and partnerships to promote the Area Committee, priorities and performance measures.
- Identify and assist Area Committees, where relevant, in generating and match funding projects of strategic significance.
- Monitor the quantity and quality of performance management, reviews and projects.
- Establish methods for promoting and sharing intelligence, information and good practice.

Area Lead Executive (ALE)

Each area will be aligned to an Area Lead Executive, who will be a member of the Council's Executive Management Team. The ALE will reinforce the strategic importance of the area dimension to the Council's policy and planning framework, and in particular will reinforce the importance the Council places on enhancing community governance, aligning resources and activity and improving public service delivery at a local level. The ALE will also ensure an improved localities dimension to the Council's strategic planning. The role is to help clear 'blockages' and ensure Area Committee issues are taken to the highest levels.

The role of the ALE is to:-

- Provide high level representation from the Council's officer core to support the process and outcomes from the Area Committee.
- Provide clarity and direction for the staff supporting the Area Committees and implement the LAPs once agreed.
- Ensure that strong links are made between the LAPs and the overarching commitments of the Sunderland Strategy, Local Area Agreement, Corporate Improvement Plan, Strategic Initiatives Budget (SIB) and Single Investment Plan (SIP) funding.

Area Officer (ArO)

The role of the ArO is to:-

- Act as the Area Chair's/Vice Chair's key liaison and support officer.
- Support, develop and update the LAP, ensuring that the Sunderland Strategy and the LAA are effectively interpreted at the local level, and that the Plan containing the relevant local priorities are consistent with Council/City-wide aims and objectives.
- Support the Area Chair/Vice Chair to ensure the implementation of the LAP (including any identified need to bid for external funds, etc).
- Work with and develop relationships with key Service Delivery Partners and delivery agents.
- Ensure the compilation and effective flow of information and intelligence to the Area Committee.
- Develop a joined up approach, across all sectors, to improve service delivery in the area.
- Work in partnership with those leading on the Community Development Plan and its implementation.

Whilst being guided by the ALEs in the particular requirements of each area, operationally, the AROs are located within the Strategic Economic Development Service, reporting through the Area Co-ordination Manager to the Head of Service. This ensures they work

within a corporate framework with links between one another and consistency of approach. (A similar model to that of the Scrutiny Team).

Democratic Services Officer (DSO)

The role of the DSO is to:-

- Efficiently and effectively manage the administration of the committee.
- Publish the agenda for the Area Committee.
- Provide advice and guidance to the Committee on constitutional matters.
- Invite all elected Members/representatives and guests to pre meetings, Area Committee and extraordinary meetings.
- Record the attendance at meetings of elected Members, representatives and guests and submit any apologies.
- Produce edit and finalise minutes of the meeting.
- Place all actions on the Area Committee Management Information System.
- Chase actions agreed upon by the committee and when necessary ensuring that relevant Service Delivery Partners/Officers feedback into the Area Committee.
- Upload all agenda, reports and minutes of meetings and post any executive decisions made by the Committee on the Council's website.
- Book venues to host pre meetings, Area Committee meetings and extraordinary meetings, prepare rooms for meetings, arrange refreshments and equipment as appropriate. .
- Manage and promote the 'Questions to Area Committee'.
- Issue materials provided by the ArO to representatives on the Committee.
- Control and manage the distribution and circulation of the agenda papers.
- Liaise with the Chair and Vice Chair on matters relating to the work of the Committee.

SCHEDULE OF AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS

	Jun-09	Jul-09	Sep-09	Nov-09	Jan-10	Mar-10	Apr-10
Coalfield 6pm Start	3rd	1st	9th	4th	6th	4th	14th
East 5.30pm Start	1st , 29th	N/A	7th	9th	4th	1st	12th
North 5.30pm Start	1st , 29th	N/A	7th	9th	4th	1st	12th
Washington 6pm Start	4th	2nd	10th	5th	7th	4th	15th
West 5.30pm Start	4th	2nd	10th	4th	6th	24th (Feb)	7th

In addition to the scheduled meetings, extraordinary meetings may be arranged if required.

KEY CONTACTS

Each Directorate will select a key contact who will monitor items on the agenda, and forward to relevant Service/Officer to inform them of items which may conflict or strengthen the Directorates policies and strategic aims.

Coalfield

Chair	Cllr John Scott	cllr.john.scott@sunderland.gov.uk
Vice Chair	Cllr Richard David Tate	cllr.richard.david.tate@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Lead Executive	Helen Paterson	helen.paterson@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Officer	Pauline Hopper	pauline.hopper@sunderland.gov.uk
Democratic Service Officer	Emma Hindmarsh	emma.hindmarsh@sunderland.gov.uk

East

Chair	Cllr Ross Wares	cllr.ross.wares@sunderland.gov.uk
Vice Chair	Cllr Ellen Ball	cllr.ellen.ball@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Lead Executive	Janet Johnson	janet.johnson@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Officer	Nicol Trueman	nicol.trueman@sunderland.gov.uk
Democratic Service Officer	Matthew Jackson	matthew.jackson@sunderland.gov.uk

North

Chair	Cllr Richard Bell	cllr.richard.bell@sunderland.gov.uk
Vice Chair	Cllr Rosalind Copeland	cllr.rosalind.copeland@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Lead Executive	Ron Odunaiya	ron.odunaiya@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Officer	Pauline Hopper	pauline.hopper@sunderland.gov.uk
Democratic Service Officer	Joanne Stewart	Joanne.stewart@sunderland.gov.uk

Washington

Chair	Cllr John Kelly	cllr.john.kelly@sunderland.gov.uk
Vice Chair	Cllr Bernard Scaplehorn	cllr.bernard.scaplehorn@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Lead Executive	Neil Revely	neil.revely@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Officer	Nicol Trueman	nicol.trueman@sunderland.gov.uk
Democratic Service Officer	Paul Wood	paul.wood@sunderland.gov.uk

West

Chair	Cllr David Forbes	cllr.david.forbes@sunderland.gov.uk
Vice Chair	Cllr Susan Watson	cllr.susan.watson@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Lead Executive	Keith Beardmore	keith.beardmore@sunderland.gov.uk
Area Officer	Richard Parry	richard.parry@sunderland.gov.uk
Democratic Service Officer	David Noon	david.noon@sunderland.gov.uk

Access

If representatives or members of the public have any particular requirements or access needs to enable them to participate in the meeting, including a requirement for information

in formats such as large print or on tape, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team beforehand so arrangements can be made in good time.

Where possible Area Committee meetings will be held in rooms which are installed with a hearing loop system and rooms are accessible for wheelchair users or people with mobility impairments.

Elected Members and non elected Member representatives on the Area Committee are entitled to access all information available to the Area Committee as well as sub-sets of the Committee such as working groups.

Where to find out more about Area Committees in Sunderland

The Council Area Committees have a dedicated web page on the Council's internet. At any stage please feel free to contact your Area Officer on 0191 561 1162.

Further information is also available from our website:
http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Public/Editable/Themes/CityCouncil /corporate /seds /draft_area_plans.asp?

Protocols

The protocols included in this Handbook are intended to provide clear procedures and processes on a number of functions to allow those involved to understand and operate effectively within the Local Area Committee.

They are intended to assist Committees and the public and other agencies to have a clear understanding of the role and function of each Area Committee in Sunderland.

They are complementary to the rules of procedure as set out in the Council's Constitution with provisions in the constitution taking precedence.

- **Protocol 1**   **Allocation of work to Area Committee**
- **Protocol 2**   **Questions to Area Committee**
- **Protocol 3**   **SIB/SIP governance**
- **Protocol 4**   **Area Review Process**
- **Protocol 5**   **Area Committee Work Plan (Sample)**
- **Protocol 6**   **Area Committee Standing Agenda**
- **Protocol 7**   **Area Committee Annual Self Assessment**

PROTOCOL 1
ALLOCATION OF WORK TO AREA COMMITTEE

1.   Area Committee Coverage
The City is made up of five areas:-

- **North Sunderland**
  Castle, Fulwell, Redhill, St Peter's and Southwick wards
- **East Sunderland**
  Doxford, Hendon, Millfield, St. Michael's and Ryhope wards
- **West Sunderland**
  St. Anne's, Pallion, Sandhill, Barnes, St. Chad's and Silksworth wards
- **Washington**
  Washington East, West, Central, North and South wards
- **Coalfield**
  Copt Hill, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards

2.   Composition
The membership of each Area Committee is all Members of the Council representing those wards included within each Area Committee boundary. Area Committee meetings are Council meetings which are usually held in public and allow local residents the opportunity to attend.

3.   Terms of Reference:-
The terms of reference of the Area Committee are as set out in Article 10.2 of the Council's Constitution:-

The purpose of the Area Committee is to:-

- Lead the development of a Local Area Plan (LAP), which includes all main priorities for improvement of the Area for approval by the Cabinet.
- Lead and enable the effective implementation of the LAP.
- Monitor the quality and effectiveness of services delivered by the Council and other main providers in the Area.
- Actively encourage local residents to become involved in decision-making on matters which affect them.

In pursuit of these objectives the Area Committee may:
- Consult, engage and involve local people, organisations and partner agencies in development and delivery of the LAP.
- Actively review the activities of other agencies within its area with a view to ensuring that services, initiatives and their manner of delivery meet local requirements as fully as possible.
- Constructively challenge service providers to improve the standards of service and the levels of public satisfaction and trust with them.
- Identify priorities for allocation of budgets delegated to the Area Committee.
- Commission activity to improve local quality of life and public satisfaction in its area.
- Promote and publicise initiatives taken to improve local quality of life and public satisfaction and to increase participation in decision-making.
- Request and consider reports in support of the Area Committee's work.

The Area Committee will also produce an Annual Report which will review and evaluate the degree to which it was successful in delivering its objectives and effective in promoting Community Leadership.

4.   LAPs and work plans

Local Area Committees will consider area priorities each year to be addressed throughout the next municipal year. Priorities identified will be agreed and a work plan established at the first meeting of the Committee in June.

The area priorities will be delivered by the Local Area Committees, providing a focal point to discuss, review and improve service delivery. The LAP highlights the top priorities for each of the five areas, encompassing all five themes and cross cutting strategies, to achieve absolute clarity and focus on things that matter most to residents.

Elected Members, Service Delivery Partners and residents were at the heart of the consultation process undertaken to shape and approve the current LAPs through events, road shows, forum discussions and on-line facilities. For further information on the LAPs log onto www.sunderland.gov.uk/localareaplans .

5.   Consultation and communication

At the start of the municipal year elected Members, Council Committees, Directorates and Service Delivery Partners will outline consultation exercises to be held throughout the year and notify the Corporate Consultation Team. To strengthen the co-ordination of consultation around the City, this information will then be placed into a core consultation database. Area Committees will be notified throughout the year of all consultation exercises being carried out in their area and build this into the work plan to ensure that Area Committees are included in the consultation process, allowing information to be shared with local key stakeholders. This follows good practice outlined in the Sunderland Compact Involvement and Consultation Code of Practice, for further information log onto **www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk** .

Each area will have a dedicated publication which will be circulated to all residents of the area, keeping residents up to date with achievements and providing the opportunity to participate and engage in future events. To include information in the publication please contact the relevant Area Officer, identified in key contacts.

6.   Agenda items

Items are placed on the agenda by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Area Committees at the agenda setting meetings, which are held four weeks in advance of the Area Committee meeting. Agenda items need to be notified to the Democratic Service Officer (DSO) for the relevant area detailed in key contacts, before the agenda setting meeting to ensure they are considered for inclusion on the finalised agenda.

An item submitted to the DSO does not automatically qualify the item to be included on the agenda, only the Chair and Vice Chair can agree this.

7.   Urgent items

Urgent items can be considered by the Area Committee, with the agreement of the Chair. All urgent items must be reported to the DSO as soon as the perceived need for an urgent item arises. The DSO will in turn contact the Chair who will consider the reason why the item is urgent and decide whether the item should be considered at the meeting. The reason why the item is considered urgent will be reported to the meeting and recorded in the minutes of the meeting, together with the discussion and decision on the item.

8. Extraordinary meetings

In addition to the seven scheduled Area Committee meetings, extraordinary Area Committee meetings may be arranged to discuss specific subjects. These meetings are Council meetings held in public and all requests to host an extra ordinary meeting will be co-ordinated by the DSO who will make arrangements for the meeting following the rules in the Council constitution.
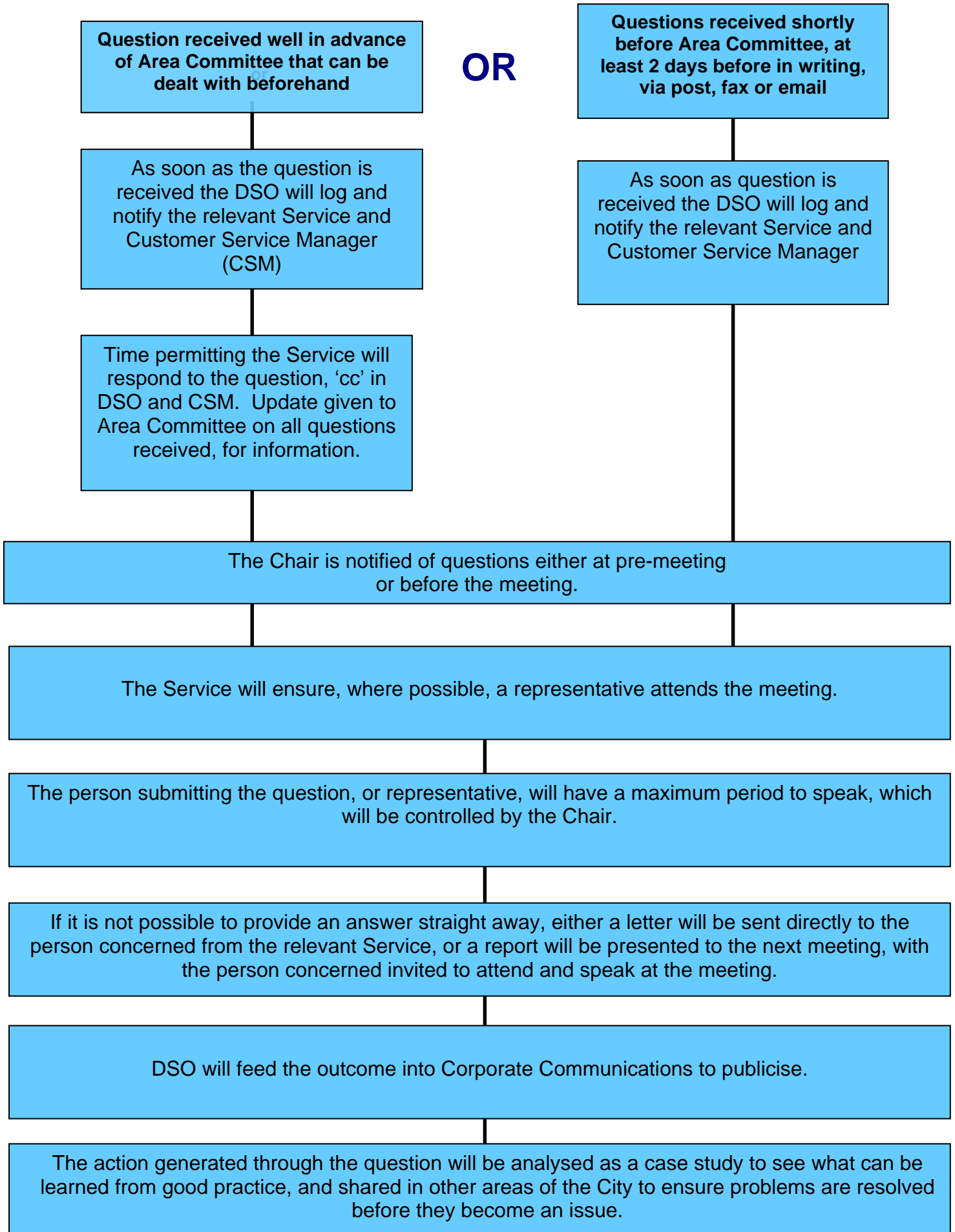
PROTOCOL 2
QUESTIONS TO AREA COMMITTEE

For the past year Committees and Service Delivery Partners have been developing the LAP and their priorities. It was identified via the consultation programme that there was a need to introduce a method in which local residents ask questions directly to their elected Members and providers of public services being delivered in their communities. Area Committee is seen as the appropriate arena to facilitate this process.
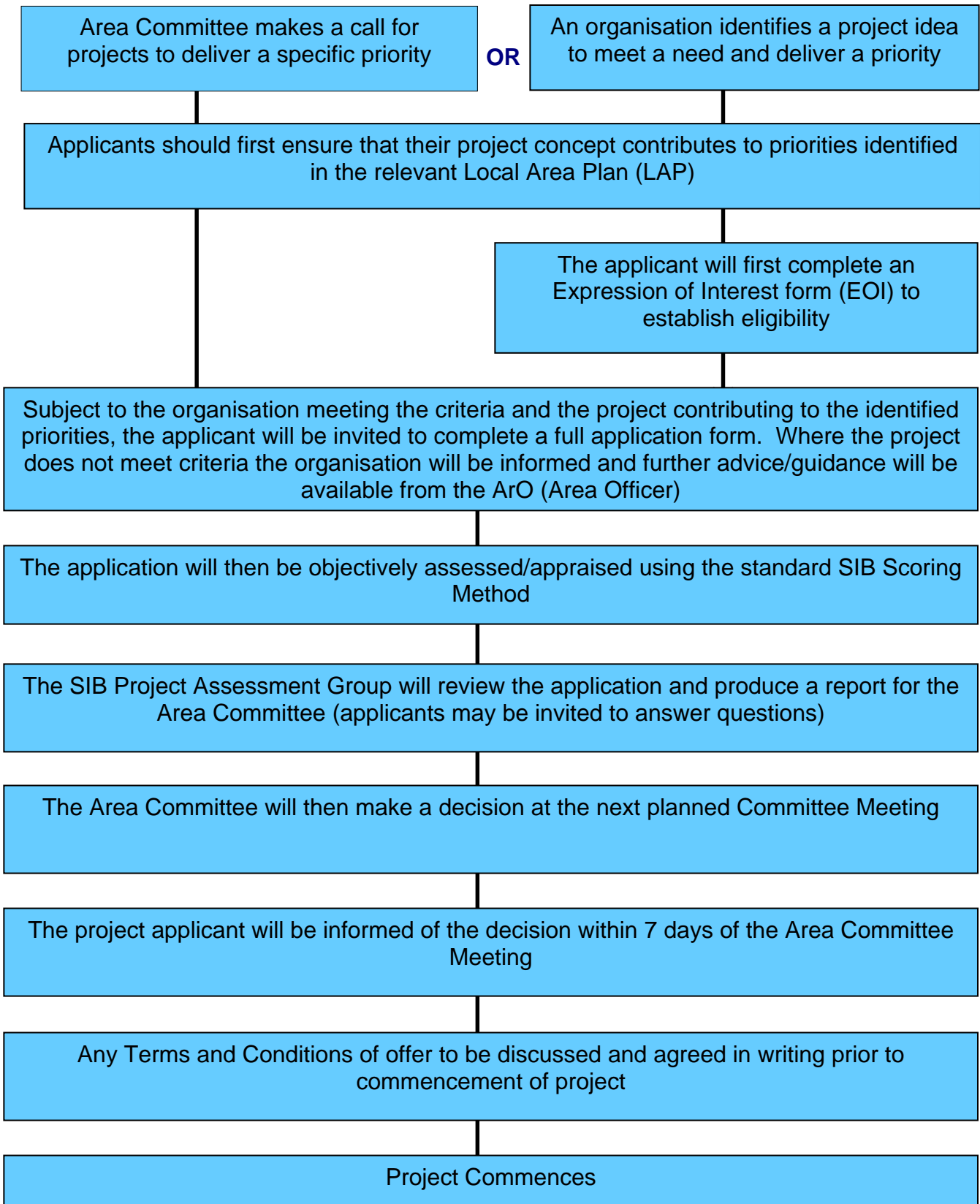
The protocol is managed by the Democratic Services Team and you should contact the DSO outlined in key contacts if you need any further advice.

- At each ordinary meeting, members of the public can submit a question (or have one submitted on their behalf) on matters that are relevant to the Area, Council and Partners agencies by the completion of the Questions to Area Committee form, up to two working days in advance of the meeting.

- All questions must be submitted before the Area Committee, if questions are received later, or during or afterwards, they will automatically be presented to the next scheduled ordinary meeting, unless they can be dealt with between meetings.

- The person submitting the question can choose to ask the question in person or have it read out for them by a nominee, or by the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer.

- The time limit given for a question is at the discretion of the Chairperson.

- The question is asked, and where possible the Committee will address and respond. If it is not possible to provide a response straight away, either a letter will be sent directly to the person concerned from the relevant officer within ten working days from the Committee date, or a report will be made on this matter to the next meeting of the Area Committee, and the person concerned will be invited to attend and speak at the meeting. In all instances a written response will be given.

- At the discretion of the Chair the person asking the question may be allowed to ask one supplementary, which must arise directly out of the original question or from the answer received.

- Committee have the opportunity of questioning to clarify any areas of doubt.

- If there is a large number of potential speakers on an issue, the Chair will ask them to select a spokesperson. If there are groups offering differing views on a particular issue more than one speaker can address the Committee, at the discretion of the Chair.

- If the Chair considers that the opportunity to address the Committee is being abused he/she has the authority to require the person to stop and if the person does not do so the Chair may require the person to leave the meeting.

- The Chair will determine the order in which the questions are asked.

QUESTIONS TO AREA COMMITTEE FLOWCHART

Question received well in advance of Area Committee that can be dealt with beforehand

OR

Questions received shortly before Area Committee, at least 2 days before in writing, via post, fax or email

As soon as the question is received the DSO will log and notify the relevant Service and Customer Service Manager (CSM)

As soon as question is received the DSO will log and notify the relevant Service and Customer Service Manager

Time permitting the Service will respond to the question, 'cc' in DSO and CSM. Update given to Area Committee on all questions received, for information.

The Chair is notified of questions either at pre-meeting or before the meeting.

The Service will ensure, where possible, a representative attends the meeting.

The person submitting the question, or representative, will have a maximum period to speak, which will be controlled by the Chair.

If it is not possible to provide an answer straight away, either a letter will be sent directly to the person concerned from the relevant Service, or a report will be presented to the next meeting, with the person concerned invited to attend and speak at the meeting.

DSO will feed the outcome into Corporate Communications to publicise.

The action generated through the question will be analysed as a case study to see what can be learned from good practice, and shared in other areas of the City to ensure problems are resolved before they become an issue.

PROTOCOL 3
SIB/SIP GOVERNANCE

Area Committee makes a call for projects to deliver a specific priority	**OR**	An organisation identifies a project idea to meet a need and deliver a priority

Applicants should first ensure that their project concept contributes to priorities identified in the relevant Local Area Plan (LAP)

The applicant will first complete an Expression of Interest form (EOI) to establish eligibility

Subject to the organisation meeting the criteria and the project contributing to the identified priorities, the applicant will be invited to complete a full application form. Where the project does not meet criteria the organisation will be informed and further advice/guidance will be available from the ArO (Area Officer)

The application will then be objectively assessed/appraised using the standard SIB Scoring Method

The SIB Project Assessment Group will review the application and produce a report for the Area Committee (applicants may be invited to answer questions)

The Area Committee will then make a decision at the next planned Committee Meeting

The project applicant will be informed of the decision within 7 days of the Area Committee Meeting

Any Terms and Conditions of offer to be discussed and agreed in writing prior to commencement of project

Project Commences

NB: The application process should normally take no more than 6-8 weeks from submission of application. In exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear emergency, the Area Committee may consider a rapid response to a request. This should be discussed in the first instance with the ArO and Area Chair and will take no longer than 3 working days to complete.

PROTOCOL 4
AREA REVIEW PROCESS

If issues or problems cannot be solved at an area level, the Area Committee can decide to elevate the matter to the appropriate body.

Council Services

In cases of City wide issues or issues that cannot be resolved locally, all Council services will be referred to the Management Scrutiny Committee or Portfolio Holder.

When applicable, issues and priorities that are considered by Scrutiny Committees or by the Portfolio Holder which have area aspects can be referred to the relevant Local Area Committee to resolve.

Non Council Services

The same principle applies if the services are non Council, as these will be referred to the LSP, and vice versa. If the LSP deem an issue to be local they can also refer the issue or priority to the relevant Local Area Committee.

A two way communication process between city and local activities will therefore be provided.

Each Area will be aware of the work plan for the LSP and the Council's Scrutiny Committees, to enable Areas to influence policies and decision making, while ensuring that city delivery plans are not duplicated and the good work is promoted locally.
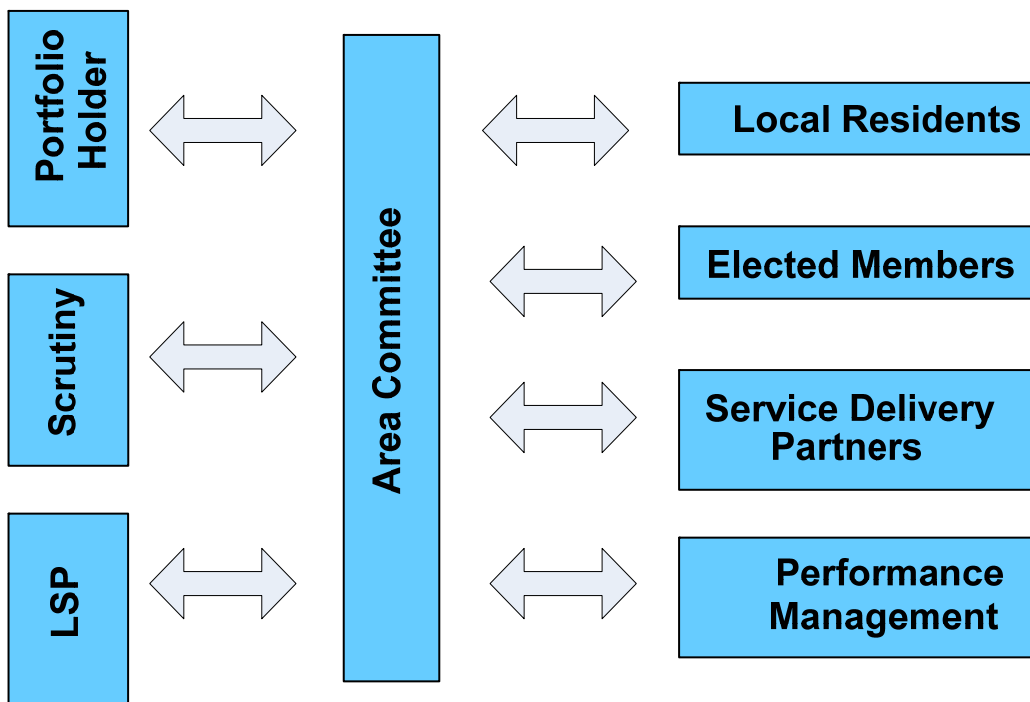
PROTOCOL 5
AREA COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2009/10 (SAMPLE)

Area Committee	Priority Item	Lead Representatives	Strategic Link
4 Jun 09	Approval LAP's and Work Plan	Chief Executive's	Cabinet July 09
2 Jul 09	**Safe Theme** • Collectively target ASB; Sign up to the 21+ scheme; strengthen relationships; Introduce Community Police Forums; Circulate a directory promote recognising good news stories.	Elected members nominated from Area Committee *Service Delivery Partners* Gentoo Sunderland, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, TPCT, VCS: *Sunderland City Council-* Health, Housing and Adult Services, Safer Sunderland Team, Corporate Communications, CCS, Children's Services, D&R	• Safer Sunderland Strategy • ASB Strategy • Sunderland Alcohol Strategy • Alcohol Treatment Plan • Safer Sunderland Partnership • Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee
10 Sep 09	**Learning Theme** • Increase youth services; deliver holistic campaigns; plan training around jobs. Target EET/NEET.	Elected members nominated from Area Committee *Service Delivery Partner:* Sunderland College, VCS *Sunderland City Council -* Children Services, Community and Cultural Services, Work based learning providers, Youth Development Group, Adult learning provider, Schools,	• 14-19 Strategy and Action Plan and ECM • Adult Learning Strategy • Education Improvement Plan • Sunderland Learning Partnership • Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee.
5 Nov 09	**Healthy Theme** • Supported housing, one to one support and personal care; Raise awareness re: access GP's or receive equipment. Strongly link preventative services and primary care.	Elected members from Area Committee *Service Delivery Partners* Gentoo, TPCT *VCS* *Sunderland City Council* Health, Housing and Adult Services, Community and Cultural Services Children Services	• Health Improvement Strategy • NHS South of The and Wear Strategic Plan • Better Health, Fairer Health, the regional health and wellbeing strategy • Choosing Health-Government White Paper • World Health Organisation (WHO) • Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
7 Jan 10	**Attractive and Inclusive** • Empty properties; SRL; Prioritise houses; parking bays; public transport; accessibility; signage; cycle routes, pavements; traffic safety; safe environment; healthy living; recycling; underpasses and unlit walkways;	Elected members from Area Committee *Service Delivery Partners* Nexus, Gentoo Sunderland, Sustrans, VCS *Sunderland City Council:* Health, Housing and Adult Services, D&R, CCS	• Housing for the Future ' A Housing Strategy for Sunderland • Prosperity and economic development strategy • Tyne and Wear Bus Strategy
4 Mar 10	**Prosperous** • un-used business units.; start up packages; training courses; private sector; recruitment agencies; locally delivered courses; schools and VCS .	Elected members from Area Committee *Service Delivery Partners* Business Link, Gentoo Living, VCS *Sunderland City Council* Office of the Chief Executives Health, Housing and Adult Services	• Working Neighbourhood Strategy • Economic Development Masterplan • Sunderland Learning Partnership • Economic Prosperity Group • Prosperity and economic development strategy
1 Apr 10	• End of Year Review: Annual Report		• Self Assessment • LAA annual report • SIB/SIP annual report

PROTOCOL 6
AREA COMMITTEE STANDING AGENDA

Every Area Committee has the standing agenda presented to each meeting, the format is outlined below.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Minutes of the last meeting** (For accuracy only)

3. **Declarations of interest**

4. **Questions to Area Committee** (Co-ordinated by DSO)

5. **Priority Theme** (Co-ordinated by Lead Agent, supported by Area Officer)

   a. Agreed priorities
   b. Performance measures
   c. Current activity (day to day)
   d. Risks
   e. Recommendation (may include call for projects)
   f. Discussion, consideration and agree mentioned way forward

6. **Feedback from Working Group** (recommend from Sept 09, monitoring and recommendations lead by Lead Agent, supported by ArO)

   a. Prosperous
   b. Learning
   c. Safe
   d. Healthy
   e. Attractive and Inclusive

7. **Items for consultation** (Recommend from Sept 09, consultation from Scrutiny, LSP, Directorates, Service Delivery Partners, etc) Co-ordinated by Consultation Manager, supported by ArO

8. **Recognition for Action** (updates on the success of publicity, media articles and website information and recommendations on public engagement and communications in the future) Co-ordinated by Corporate Communications, supported by ArO

9. **Financial statement and requests** (combine SIB/SIP and Community Chest into one report, as CC is SIB funding, outlining funding available and requests for approval.) led by ArO/Community Chest Officer

10. **Date, Time and Venue of next meeting**

PROTOCOL 7
ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT

In April each year Area Committee will produce an Annual Report which will review and evaluate the degree to which it was successful in achieving its objectives and effective in promoting Community Leadership through the LAP.

Below indicates the framework of the Annual Report

1. Statistical Circumstances

a. Quality of Life indicators showing improvements

2. Services Improvements

a. Local service quality issues identified
b. Local service issues resolved and length of time taken
c. Local service issues escalated to Scrutiny Committee and the LSP

3. Public Trust/Satisfaction/Perception Levels

a. Public perceptions of the Council improving
 i. Quality of local neighbourhood
ii. Quality of local services

4. Member, Resident and Service Delivery Partner Satisfaction

a. Member satisfaction with operation of Area Committee
b. Resident satisfaction with committee outcomes
c. Service Delivery Partner satisfaction with operation of Area Committee

5. Budget Management

a. Percentage of budget allocated proactively to Committee priorities
b. Performance monitoring of SIB/SIP grants
c. Leverage achieved by use of Area Budgets

6. Operation of Meetings

a. Attendance Levels
 i. Members
ii. Public
iii. Service Delivery Partners

b. Percentage of agenda time spent on
 i. Performance Monitoring
ii. Problem solving
iii. Area service review
iv. Area circumstance review