

CABINET MEETING – 12 February 2026
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Area Committee Boundary Review

Author(s):

Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the report is to seek approval for revisions to Area Committee boundaries, encompassing the changes to ward boundaries that will be enacted under the Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2025 (the 2025 Order) from May 2026 and for the review and refresh of the Terms of Reference associated with Area Committees, set out in Article 10 of the Constitution.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Recommend Council to:
 - i. approve the revisions to 3 of the 5 existing Area Committee boundaries and revise ward names within all 5 boundaries as set out in the Report and Appendix 1, to take effect from 7th May 2026, and
 - ii. authorise the Assistant Director of Law and Governance to amend Article 10 of the Constitution to reflect these changes and to make such other consequential amendments to the Constitution as are necessary.
2. Agree to work with Elected Members and other partners to review the Terms of Reference for Area Committees set out in Article 10 of the Constitution and bring forward refreshed proposals to Council for approval; and
3. Approve and endorse the revised funding allocations for each of the Area Committees as set out in paragraph 3.6 and 3.7.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?

Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

1. The changes to ward boundaries and ward names introduced as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission review and subsequent enactment of the 2025 Order impacts on the provisions for Area Committees set out in Article 10 of the Council's Constitution. Amending Article 10 as proposed in the report will ensure that Area Committee boundaries and ward names are consistent with the relevant provisions of the 2025 Order, when they come into effect.

2. Feedback from resident engagement and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations identified the potential for Area Committees to add value to the Council's wider approach to engagement with residents and communities and it is considered that this can best be developed in consultation with elected members and partners.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

1. Not to amend the provisions regarding Area Committees as set out in Article 10 of the Constitution.

This is not recommended as if Article 10 remains unchanged, its provisions will not be consistent with the relevant provisions of the 2025 Order when they come into effect.

2. To agree different boundaries for the Area Committees to those recommended in the Report, in particular, to place Tunstall and Humbledon ward in West Area Committee rather than East and to place Barnes and Thornhill ward in East Area Committee rather than West.

This is not recommended as it would have a more significant impact on Community Organisations delivering in those areas, where there are established VCSE Networks and those networks work closely with Area Committees to deliver for communities. This option would necessitate an increased number of moves of Organisations within those networks, placing additional strain on them. In addition, this option would create a more significant impact on community assets and facilities, with the proposal meaning twice as many would shift into different Area Committee boundaries compared to current arrangements where there are well-established working relationships.

3. Not to undertake a review of the Terms of Reference for Area Committees.

This is not recommended as it is considered that a review will maximise the potential to add value to the Council's approach to engagement with residents and communities.

Impacts analysed:

Equality Privacy Sustainability Crime and Disorder

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? **Yes**

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? **Yes**

Is it included in the 28-day Notice of Decisions? **Yes**

CABINET - 12 FEBRUARY 2026

AREA COMMITTEE BOUNDARY REVIEW

Report of the Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for revisions to Area Committee boundaries, encompassing the changes to ward boundaries that will be enacted under the Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2025 (the 2025 Order) from May 2026 and for the review and refresh of the Terms of Reference associated with Area Committees, set out in Article 10 of the Constitution.

2.0 Description of Decision (Recommendations)

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Recommend to Council to:

- i. approve the revisions to 3 of the 5 existing Area Committee boundaries and revise ward names within all 5 boundaries as set out in the Report and Appendix 1, to take effect from 7th May 2026; and
- ii. authorise the Assistant Director of Law and Governance to amend Article 10 of the Constitution to reflect these changes and to make such other consequential amendments to the Constitution as are necessary.

2. Agree to work with Elected Members and other partners to review the Terms of Reference for Area Committees set out in Article 10 of the Constitution and bring forward refreshed proposals to Council for approval; and.

3. Approve and endorse the revised funding allocations for each of the Area Committees as set out in paragraph 3.6 and 3.7.

3.0 Background/Current Position

3.1 The 2025 Order was enacted following the review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Boundary Commission). With effect from 7th May 2026, the 2025 Order abolishes the existing wards in the City, which from that date will be divided into the 25 wards listed in the Schedule to the Order, with each ward comprising the area shown on the relevant map held by the Boundary Commission. These changes will impact on 3 of the 5 existing Area Committee boundaries as some of the new wards will cross existing area boundaries (Sunderland East, West and Coalfield). Additionally, several ward boundaries will encompass slightly different geographies and/or have been renamed. These changes will need to be reflected in Article 10 of the Constitution, so that it is clear which wards are contained within each Area Committee boundary.

3.2 It is proposed that the changes to Article 10 will come into effect on the 7th May, as this is the date on which the new ward arrangements under the 2025

Order come into force. This will also ensure that the updated arrangements are in place in time for Annual Council and the appointment of elected members to the various Council committees, including the Area Committees.

- 3.3 Additionally, decisions on the boundaries are required in order that data can be gathered to inform the review of Area Committee Area Plans. The current 2023 – 2026 Area Plans are in the last year of delivery and are due to be reviewed and approved for implementation from April 2026 for a further 3-year period. It is proposed that existing Area Plan priorities are extended for a further year to allow sufficient time to gather data and carry out resident engagement which will in turn inform the development of future area plans, the detail of which will be the subject of a separate Cabinet report in March 2026.
- 3.4 The proposed new Area Committee boundaries and ward names are attached as Appendix 1 – Area Committee Boundaries Map 1 and outlined below: -
- **Sunderland North** – Hylton Castle, Redhouse, Southwick, Fulwell, Roker wards
 - **Sunderland East** – Deptford and Hendon, Tunstall and Humbledon, Grangetown, Ryhope, Doxford Park wards.
 - **Sunderland West** – Pennywell and South Hylton, Pallion and Ford, Grindon and Thorney Close, Farringdon and Silksworth, Barnes and Thornhill wards.
 - **Washington** – Washington Central, East, North, South and West wards.
 - **Coalfield** – Penshaw and Shiney Row, Herrington and Newbottle, Houghton North, Houghton South and Hetton Downs, Hetton wards.
- 3.5 The proposals outlined in 3.4 incorporate the need for boundary changes to East, West and Coalfield Area Committees. This is the preferred option as it creates the least disruption for elected members and community organisations who deliver in those areas and are members of the established Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Networks. This proposal affects fewer organisations and facilities, reducing the strain on VCSE organisations that are part of the existing networks, many of whom are embedded within current Area Committee arrangements and benefit from well-established working relationships.
- 3.6 These proposals reflect 5 wards in each of the Area Committees. Using a similar approach previously adopted to allocate funding to each Area Committee, it is proposed to allocate £100,000 to each committee, with the remainder allocated based on population. The following allocations are proposed: Sunderland North £390,403; Sunderland East £410,705; Sunderland West £427,183; Washington £389,446; and Coalfield £388,929.
- 3.7 Given that new ward boundaries will not be introduced until 7th May 2026 it is also proposed that of the £10,000 Community Chest allocated per ward for 2026-2027, £1,000 of it is allocated in the existing ward boundary from 1st April through to 6th May and the remaining £9,000 is allocated based upon the new ward boundary from 7th May, 2026 and for the remainder of the financial year.

3.8 Area Committees are well established and provide a valuable forum for elected members and partners, along with community representatives including the VCSE, to come together and discuss issues related to their Area. Recent resident feedback from the annual resident survey and extensive engagement carried out to inform the Strengthening Communities strategy, in addition to recommendations made as a result of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, has suggested that the strengths of Area Committees could be further built on in terms of engagement with residents and communities. As such, it is proposed that work be undertaken with Area Committees to review the potential for bolstered resident engagement and links to communities, building on the good practice that already exists to identify areas for improvement.

3.8 It is therefore proposed that a further review is carried out of the Area Committee arrangements, to consider the role of the Committees and the elected members alongside partners and community representatives, with a view to producing refreshed terms of reference. With a particular focus on data, insight and engagement, this will support the development and delivery of Area Committee Area Plans and any priorities at a local or neighbourhood level, in addition to reviewing how Area Committees are operating in those revised boundary areas.

4.0 Reasons for the Decision

4.1 The changes to ward boundaries and ward names introduced as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission review and subsequent enactment of the 2025 Order impacts on the provisions for Area Committees set out in Article 10 of the Council's Constitution. Amending Article 10 as proposed in the report will ensure that Area Committee boundaries and ward names are consistent with the relevant provisions of the 2025 Order, when they come into effect.

4.2 Feedback from resident engagement and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations identified the potential for Area Committees to add value to the Council's wider approach to engagement with residents and communities and it is considered that this can best be developed in consultation with elected members and partners.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 Not to amend the provisions regarding Area Committees as set out in Article 10 of the Constitution.

This is not recommended as if Article 10 remains unchanged, its provisions will not be consistent with the relevant provisions of the 2025 Order when they come into effect.

5.2 To agree different boundaries for the Area Committees to those recommended in the Report, in particular, to place Tunstall and Humbledon ward in West Area Committee rather than East and to place Barnes and Thornhill ward in East Area Committee rather than West.

This is not recommended as it would have a more significant impact on Community Organisations delivering in those areas, where there are established VCSE Networks and those networks work closely with Area

Committees to deliver for communities. This option would necessitate an increased number of moves of Organisations within those networks, placing additional strain on them. In addition, this option would create a more significant impact on community assets and facilities, with the proposal meaning twice as many would shift into different Area Committee boundaries compared to current arrangements where there are well-established working relationships.

5.3 Not to undertake a review of the Terms of Reference for Area Committees.

This is not recommended as it is considered that a review will maximise the potential to add value to the Council's approach to engagement with residents and communities.

6.0 Impact Analysis

(a) **Equalities** - The proposed revisions to Area Committee boundaries and associated constitutional changes are administrative in nature and are designed to ensure alignment with the ward boundaries established under the Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2025, with no negative equality impacts. Work done to review the Terms of Reference for Area Committees will be subject to equality analysis at the appropriate stage of their development.

(b) Sustainability

Sunderland City Plan Strategy Objectives cross checked with decisions. outcomes:

Dynamic Smart City

- ✓ A stronger city centre with more businesses, housing and cultural opportunities
- ✓ More and better housing
- ✓ More and better jobs
- ✓ More local people with better qualifications and skills
- ✓ A lower carbon city with greater digital connectivity for all

Healthy Smart City

- ✓ Great transport links with low carbon and active travel opportunities for all
- ✓ Equitable opportunities and the best life chances for children
- ✓ High quality support and social care that enables those who need it to live the life they want to lead
- ✓ Reduced health inequalities enabling more people to live healthier longer lives
- ✓ A cleaner and more attractive city and neighbourhoods

Vibrant Smart City

- ✓ Residents who are more resilient to ongoing challenges including the cost-of-living crisis
- ✓ Residents feeling proud of the city and the place where they live with more people active and participating in their communities
- ✓ More people visiting Sunderland with businesses thriving and more residents shaping and participating in cultural events and activities

- ✓ More people feeling safe in their homes and neighbourhoods and businesses benefitting from the city's safe and secure environment

(c) **Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion**

Area Committees working in collaboration with key stakeholders can develop, design and deliver programmes, services and new investments that will positively impact on crime and disorder, Anti-Social Behaviour and improve community cohesion as well as supporting vulnerable groups away from criminal behaviour.

7.0 **Financial Implications**

Financial provision for Neighbourhood Funding of £2,006,666 to support the delivery of the five Area Committee Area Plan priorities for 2026/2027 is included within the Council's revenue budget for 2026.2027. Wider financial support for the plans will also be explored from partners or where partners can deliver activity directly.

8.0 **Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

Co-operative Values – Area Committees, through delivery of the five Area Committee Area Plans, demonstrate the values of a Co-operative Council by providing better and more resilient neighbourhoods, providing support for those in greatest need and creating more mixed and sustainable communities.

Risk Analysis – The Area Committee Area Plans sit within a financial and governance framework that would be fully monitored and assessed. All projects in terms of financial viability and risks are scrutinised by relevant officers within the area arrangements service and considered by each Area Committee for approval.

Legal Implications – The Assistant Director of Law and Governance has been consulted on this report, and her comments have been incorporated throughout, where necessary.

Policy Implications – The Council is committed to the Area Committee Area Plans and delivery will align with existing Council policy arrangements.

Implications for Other Services – Council Services are required to identify Area Priorities as part of the Council's approach to developing Service Plans.

The Public / External Bodies – The Council works extensively and closely with elected members and partners across the city in supporting the role of the Area Committee and in the development and delivery of the Area Committee Area Plans in addition to engaging with residents.

10.0. **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Area Committee Boundaries Map 1

Appendix 2 – Area Committee Boundaries Map 2

