SECTION 11: AREA COMMITTEES

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 This part of the Constitution describes the Council functions for which area committees are to be responsible. Some are executive functions, and the delegation is made by the Executive Councillor responsible for that function. Some delegations relate to regulatory matters, and these are made by the Council.

11.1.2 The principal areas for which area committees have responsibilities are:
- Environmental Improvements
- Parks and Recreation Services
- Community Services (excluding management of the Council’s housing stock)
- Streetscene Services
- Projects funded by developer contributions that relate to public art, the public realm, community facilities and open space
- Safer City grants

11.2 Environmental Improvements

11.2.1 The Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places may delegate a budget to area committees for the purpose of carrying out environmental improvements. In delegating a budget, the Executive Councillor may set criteria or conditions for its expenditure.

11.2.2 Area committees are not obliged to spend delegated capital budgets in the year in respect of which they receive them. It is open to area committees to “save up” capital budgets of this kind for environmental improvements.

11.2.3 Area committees shall have the role of investigating, identifying, consulting on and approving local environmental improvement projects, subject to their budget and to any criteria or conditions set by the Executive Councillor.

11.2.4 Area committees may be consulted on periodic reviews of Council policies and strategies affecting local environmental issues (e.g. the Planning Obligation Strategy, the Walking and Cycling Strategy).

11.2.5 Area committees may seek additional funding for environmental improvement projects, by bidding for other Council funding (for instance, ‘Sustainable City’ grants or City Centre Management grants). They may also seek additional external funding, for instance through partnership schemes or other sources of grant aid.
11.2.6 Each area committee will be required to submit an annual report to the March cycle of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, setting out progress with schemes being dealt with by that area committee and identifying any projects where additional funding may be required so that a decision can be made about budget allocation. Such a system will also enable the Executive Councillor and Scrutiny Committee to consider planned ‘rollovers’ of budgets from one year to the next and to take an overview of environmental improvement work in the city.

11.3 Parks And Recreation Services

11.3.1 Area committees will contribute to the scrutiny of local Parks and Recreation Services by considering parks and recreation issues which affect their area. In pursuit of this, area committees are asked to encourage links between themselves and local sports clubs and facility user forums, such as the Allotment Forum.

11.3.2 Area committees may recommend changes to the provision or management of local parks and recreation services, although any recommendations would need to be considered in the context of budgetary provision, overall parks and recreation policies and competing needs.

11.3.3 Area committees may be consulted on periodic reviews of Council policies and strategies affecting parks and recreation services (e.g. Parks Strategy, the Sports Development Strategy).

11.4 Community Development

11.4.1 Area committees will contribute to the Council’s community development role by promoting public awareness and involvement, making the links between local communities, Housing Associations, Tenants Groups etc. and the area committees.

11.4.2 Area committees may consider the provision of community facilities at neighbourhood level, identify any gaps, and make recommendations on priorities for development.

11.4.3 Area committees may be consulted on applications for grants for community activities in their areas, and may monitor the use of grant aid by recipients.

11.4.4 The Executive Councillor for Communities may delegate a budget to area committees to enable area committees to award grants for community activities in their areas. In delegating a budget, the Executive Councillor may set criteria or conditions for its expenditure.

11.4.5 Area committees may monitor and review neighbourhood services in their areas for children and families; e.g. Community and Neighbourhood Play Areas.
11.4.6 Area committees may extend the Council’s engagement with children and young people by including a role for young people in the work of the committees.

11.5 Streetscene Services

11.5.1 Area committees may consult local people about local priorities for streetscene services. (Street cleansing, public conveniences, grass cutting and maintenance of planted areas.)

11.5.2 Area committees may set local priorities for streetscene works subject to:

- Maintaining minimum statutory service standards;
- Accommodating changes within agreed budgets; and
- Not adversely affecting services in other areas.

11.5.3 Area committees may review and monitor the provision of streetscene services within their areas. They may make recommendations for changes or enhancements to the Executive Councillor or to service managers.

11.5.4 Area committees may review and monitor the provision of the Ranger Service within their areas. They may make recommendations for changes or enhancements to the Executive Councillor or to service managers.

11.7 Decision-making on Projects Funded by Developer Contributions

11.7.1 Area committees are to be given delegated budgets and delegated decision making powers in respect of projects funded by developer contributions in the following terms:

11.7.2 The projects funded by developer contributions within the scope of area committees are projects relating to:

- Public Art
- Public Realm
- Community Facilities
- Open Spaces

11.7.3 Any decisions by area committees about the use of developer contributions for projects will be made in accordance with Council policy and budgeting procedures and, with the exception of public art, will take account of area needs assessments to be adopted by each area committee.

11.7.4 Funding from developer contributions will be given to area committees on the following basis:
• Where developer contributions derive from a planning application determined by an area committee, the use of contributions made for the purposes set out in paragraph 12.7.2 shall be determined by that area committee.

• Where developer contributions derive from a planning application determined by the Planning Committee, the Executive Councillor for the relevant service area shall determine the proportion of the developer contributions to be made available for the use of the area committee with a presumption that 50% of contributions made for the purposes set out in paragraph 12.7.2 shall be made available.

• If a developer contribution given to area committees is not committed to be spent within three years of receipt by the Council, the Executive Councillor may decide how the contribution is to be spent.

11.7.5 The area needs assessments referred to in paragraph 12.7.3 shall be made in accordance with the following principles:

• An area needs assessment will be produced every three years for each area committee and will be based on a desk top analysis.

The assessment will seek to do the following:

• Quantify the existing population within the area, split by age structure;

• Estimate new development taking place within the area over the next three years and assess its impact on the existing population;

• Summarise existing provision of facilities etc with commentary on the potential for enhancing or modernising them;

• Identify the need or scope for new provision of facilities etc or new projects.

The area committee will consult on its area needs assessment before approval.

The area needs assessment will be used by officers to develop and cost projects and to identify the extent to which they may be funded by developer contributions, for the purpose of preparing a report for the area committee. This report will form the basis of area committee decisions to approve projects.

11.7.6 The area needs assessment may be used to identify projects not funded by developer contributions but funding for these would be subject to the Council’s regular budgeting procedures.

11.7.7 Area committee decisions on public art projects funded from developer contributions will be made on the basis of officer reports submitted from time to time.

11.8 Safer City Grants

11.8.1 The Executive Councillor may allocate a budget to area committees for making grants.
11.8.2 Area committees shall determine applications for grants in accordance with any policies or other guidance set by the Executive Councillor.

11.8.3 Officers shall advertise the availability of grants and invite applications. Applications shall be reported to the area committees, according to the area in which grant aided works are proposed, in March or April/May onwards depending on Area Committee dates, each year for consideration.

11.8.4 If funds remain after the “bidding round” described in 12.8.3, further grant applications may be made. These shall be determined by Strategic Director after consultation with the Chairs of Area Committees, relevant Ward Councillors and Opposition Spokes Persons as and when the applications are received and outside of Area Committees.

11.8.5 Any safer city grant allocation unspent by an area committee by 1 December in any year shall be returned to the Executive Councillor for reallocation to any area committee that has suitable unfunded grant applications for inclusion in the ‘Citywide’ pot for re-distribution to other areas, if appropriate applications have been made.

11.8.6 Grant applications that relate to the area of more than one area committee shall be determined by the Executive Councillor in consultation with the Chair and Opposition Spokespersons of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

11.9 Planning and development briefs

11.9.1 New planning and development briefs (including Supplementary Planning Documents and planning guidance) on sites within the City boundary (but not within the Cambridge Fringe sites), whether produced by Planning Services or by a developers agent under the editorial control of Planning Services shall be referred to the relevant area committee prior to consultation, and prior to final adoption by the Executive Councillor, in place of current pre-scrutiny arrangements, other than:

11.9.2 (Where cross area committee boundary proposals are involved; or proposals related to major schemes involving more than 250 dwellings or 10,000m2 of other or mixed floor space the default pre-scrutiny process will include presentation to the Area Committee(s) but the final recommendation will be from Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee to the Executive Councillor).

11.9.3 Any Neighbourhood Planning proposals which may be promoted under the provisions of the Localism Act will need to be considered by Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee because of their relationship with emerging policy development through the review of the Cambridge Local Plan.
11.10 Tree Works
11.10.1 The Executive Councillor may delegate decisions on tree works to area committees.

11.11 General
11.11.1 The Council, its committees, Executive Councillors and officers may, from time to time, delegate such further functions to area committees as they judge appropriate.