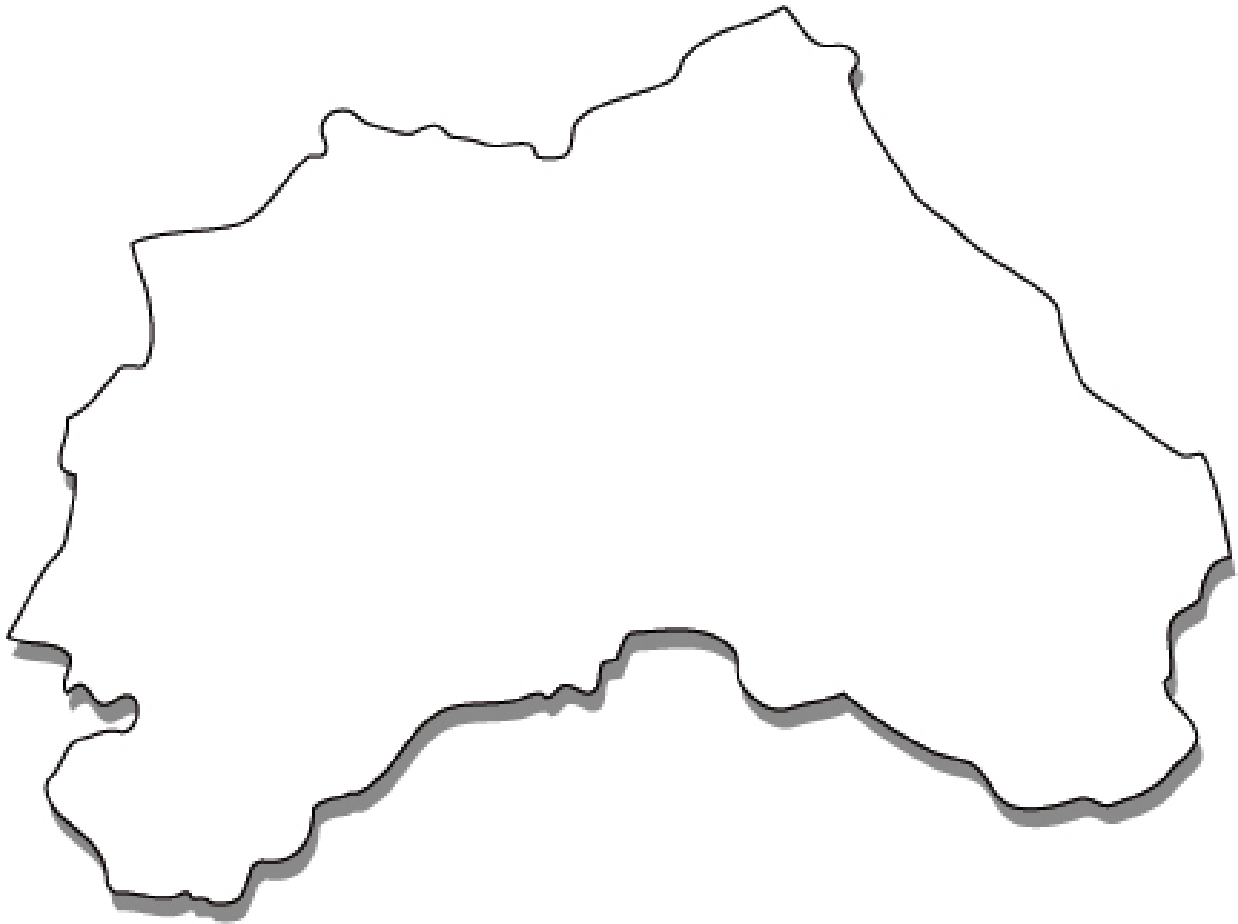


Welcome Pack



Overview of Oldham's Area Committees

September 2008

Oldham's Area Committees

Introduction

This welcome pack provides an overview about Oldham's Area Committees and covers the following topics:

- the structure of the Area Committees;
- summary of terms of reference and principles underlying the Area Committees;
- Area Committee membership and procedures for selection of co-optees;
- rules of procedure for the Area Committees;
- decision making at Area Committees;
- arrangements for public attendance and participation in the Area Committees;
- relationship of Area Committees to Overview & Scrutiny and Area Action Teams; and
- Standards and conduct at Area Committees;

Further detailed information on the Area Committees can also be found on the Oldham Council website at www.oldham.gov.uk/council/area-committees or from the Neighbourhoods Team.

The Area Committees

There are 10 Area Committees representing different parts of the Borough with each being supported by a Neighbourhood Manager. The make up of each Area Committee area was decided upon following consultation with residents and is as follows:

Council Wards	Area Committee	Neighbourhood Manager	
		Name	Telephone and Email
Alexandra	Alexandra	Zaiem Khan	0161 770 5162 zaiem.khan@oldham.gov.uk
Coldhurst	Coldhurst		
Medlock Vale	Medlock Vale		
Werneth	Werneth		
St. James' Waterhead St. Mary's	East Oldham	Shashi Mohandas	0161 770 5160 shashi.mohandas@oldham.gov.uk
Chadderton Central Chadderton North Chadderton South	Chadderton	Simon Shuttleworth	0161 770 4720 simon.shuttleworth@oldham.gov.uk
Crompton Shaw Royton North Royton South	Royton, Shaw & Crompton	Jan Joshi	0161 770 5161 jan.joshi@oldham.gov.uk
Hollinwood	Hollinwood	John Norris	0161 770 5025 john.norris@oldham.gov.uk
Failsworth East Failsworth West	Failsworth		
Saddleworth North Saddleworth South Saddleworth West & Lees	Saddleworth & Lees	Lisa Macdonald	0161 770 5195 lisa.macdonald@oldham.gov.uk

The Neighbourhoods Team is managed by Mark Simmons who can be contacted on 0161 770 5193 or at mark.simmons@oldham.gov.uk.

The main roles of the Neighbourhood Managers are to:

- facilitate Area Committee meetings by ensuring all stakeholders are involved;
- collect, use and share information obtained through Area Committees to develop appropriate action plans;
- work with service managers to ensure the delivery of services locally reflects the desires of the Area Committee;
- co-ordinate the work of the multi-agency Area Action Teams to tackle local issues; and
- support people who want to get more involved in the running of their local area.

Summary of Terms of Reference

The Area Committees aim to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and their work is primarily based upon the following principles:

- championing the area by raising issues of concern to residents and businesses with the Council and other organisations;
- influence how services and spending are delivered for the area;
- providing a forum at which local residents and businesses can question the Council and partner organisations about local issues, the delivery of services and proposals affecting the area;
- enabling local communities to express their views upon, and have opportunities to influence, decisions which affect them;
- ensuring that local needs are taken into account by decision makers;
- encouraging the active participation of residents and local organisations in improving the quality of life in the area;
- fostering good community relations between people of different ages, and ethnic and social backgrounds, both within the area and across the Borough; and
- building partnership between the Council, communities and other organisations in working for the benefit of the area.

Membership and selection of co-optees

All procedures followed by each Area Committee are in accordance with the Council's Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

Membership of the Area Committee

All Councillors for the wards comprising the Area Committee are members of the Area Committee. The Council selects one Councillor on each Area Committee to act as a Councillor 'Community Champion', to play a lead role on behalf of the other Councillors in supporting the operation of the Area Committee.

The main roles of the Councillor Community Champions are to:

- ensure that the other ward Councillors from the Area Committee are kept well informed and are appropriately involved in meetings and relevant activities;
- ensure that the Area Committee meetings are relevant to local people, include issues of local importance and that there is an effective response to any matters raised through the Area Committee;
- ensure that priorities emerging from the Area Committee meetings and related activities are effectively represented at the relevant Area Action Team or other relevant forums; and
- ensure the appropriate involvement of local people, organisations and businesses in finding solutions to local issues.

Role and requirements of co-opted members

The intention of having co-opted members of the public on the Area Committee is to improve the range of knowledge and expertise on the Area Committee so that it is better able to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

The main roles of a co-opted member are to:

- attend meetings of the Area Committee and contribute views and ideas on matters relating to the area;
- contribute to the work of one or more of the Area Committee sub-groups;
- be a key contact for Councillors and organisations working within the Area Committee area;
- represent the Area Committee on other bodies as required, and brief the Area Committees on relevant issues relating to the activity of these bodies;
- help the Area Committee to organise and run local events;
- assist with the distribution of publicity and marketing material within the Area Committee area; and
- attend training sessions provided for members of the Area Committee.

Co-opted members of Area Committees serve for 4 years from the date of the Council's Annual meeting in May of the year of their election. Co-opted members elected part way through the term of office to fill any vacancies serve for the remainder of the 4 years' term of office.

Co-opted members are expected to work for the benefit of people throughout the Area Committee area and not just particular areas or communities within it and are also required to sign the Councillor Code of Conduct as a condition of office.

Rules for co-option of members

The following rules apply in co-opting people onto Area Committees:

- each Area Committee may appoint up to a maximum of 4 co-opted members per ward in the Area Committee area;

- no-one may be a member of more than one Area Committee;
- those applying to serve as a co-opted member of an Area Committee will be expected to live within the wards which make up the Area Committee area;
- generally co-opted members will be expected to be on the Council's Electoral Register at the time of their election;
- for legal reasons, employees of the Council cannot serve on Area Committees as co-opted members;
- some co-opted members may be elected as representatives of established and appropriately representative bodies or associations which function in the area, and which already exist mainly to deal with matters of interest to the area, its residents or businesses. People who are nominated on that basis will be expected to represent the organisation to which they belong; and
- any eligible member of the public will be welcome to put themselves forward as a prospective co-opted member of an Area Committee, however preference will be given to nominees who are able to show they represent a wider community group.

Co-opted members who fail to attend 3 consecutive Area Committee meetings without good reason will automatically be deselected as a co-optee.

Selection procedure for co-optees

Nominations are invited for prospective Area Committee co-optees as and when vacancies occur via "nomination" forms submitted to the Neighbourhood Managers Team. The forms require:

- a brief personal profile of the nominee;
- when the nomination is on behalf of an organisation, a brief profile of the organisation, and confirmation that the nominee is its approved choice;
- a summary of what the nominee thinks s/he can bring to the role of Co-opted Member; and
- positive confirmation that the nominee is aware of the requirements for co-option and agrees to conform to them.

Only Councillors on the Area Committee are eligible to vote on the selection of co-opted members with the election process being administered by the Neighbourhood Manager or another designated officer of the Council.

Rules of Procedure for Area Committees

Schedule of meetings

Meetings of each Area Committee are held on such dates and times as determined by the Council at the commencement of each Municipal Year and on such other dates as determined by the Chair of each Area Committee, but this will likely to be 6 times per year.

Chair and Vice-Chair

Each Area Committee appoints a Chair and Vice Chair at its first meeting of the Municipal Year. The Chair and Vice-Chair can be either a Councillor or a co-opted member.

The main roles of the Chair are to:

- attend the meetings of the Area Committee and chair the meetings with support from Officers;
- make suggestions to the Area Committee/Community Champion on processes that will enable local people to make effective contributions;
- be involved in processes that ensure the transparency about how funds are allocated by the Area Committee; and
- be involved in preparing and publicising the Area Committee's agendas and newsletters.

Sub-committees and working groups

Area Committees may establish sub-committees or working groups as required with varying membership and terms of reference. The sub meeting can be held between the Area Committee meetings.

Agenda and Minutes

Agendas for each Area Committee meeting are prepared by the Chair in consultation with the Councillor Community Champion, with support from officers and publicised at least 5 days prior to each meeting.

A record of decisions is taken and a summary of proceedings is created as minutes of each meeting. The minutes are not word for word nor do they include all comments made but give a flavour of the debate and the reasoning behind decisions reached.

Copies of documents for each Area Committee meeting are made available for public inspection at meetings or via the Council's website at www.oldham.gov.uk or from the Neighbourhoods Team.

Duration of meetings

At the discretion of the Chair elements of the agenda may be time limited to provide a framework for each Area Committee meeting. Unless there are exceptional circumstances meetings do not finish later than 9.30 pm and not last longer than two hours.

Decision Making

Links to existing arrangements

The Council has a Scheme of Delegation (a document which sets out who is allowed to take what decisions) contained in the Constitution. Decisions are taken under delegated powers by:

- Council;
- Cabinet;
- Chief Officers, either independently or in consultation with Cabinet Members; or
- By Officers who have powers delegated to them by their Chief Officer.

Area Committees are another point of decision making within the delegated arrangements existing within the Council.

Decisions made under the powers delegated to the Area Committee about local matters may be acted upon immediately. These decisions are binding upon the Council and are shown as “Resolved” within minutes.

Decisions made on other matters may require ratification or further consideration by officers or the Cabinet before implementation and may not be implemented. In the latter case the officer responsible will advise the Area Committee of the reasons why the recommendation has not been implemented. These decisions are shown as “Recommended” within minutes.

Using Delegated Powers

The delegation of decisions to the Area Committee will not affect the availability or direction of advice from officers. The important features of the Area Committee arrangements are that:

- it is clear who makes the decisions;
- those responsible for decisions are publicly accountable to the area;
- members of the public can with the consent of the Chair actively involve themselves in the discussions leading to decisions being made;
- the process of decision making is open to examination by members of the public; and
- decisions are timely and sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the area.

Voting on Matters Delegated to the Area Committee by the Council

When decisions about matters delegated by the Council to the Area Committee are to be taken, they are decided by consulting the co-opted members then by a vote amongst the Councillors present at the meeting. Decisions on these matters are arrived at by a simple majority of the Councillors present and voting.

Voting on Other Matters

When the Area Committee wishes to record a local view about a matter not delegated to the Committee it arrives at its decision by taking into account the views of the co-opted members. In addition the Chair may choose to canvass the opinion of the public at a meeting by way of a show of hands before the Area Committee make their decision.

Where the Area Committee is invited to elect a representative to serve on another body the views of all members of the Area Committee will be sought in choosing their representative.

Area Committee Budgets

At the commencement of each financial year the Council’s Cabinet grants each Area Committee an annual maximum budget to be expended on promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. All expenditure must comply with the Council’s Financial Regulations. There are a set of detailed budget guidelines enclosed with this pack.

Area Committees cannot expend this budget in a way which will incur ongoing costs beyond the end of the current financial year without the prior written and recorded approval

of the Council. Expenditure must not be incurred beyond the end of the financial year in which the budgets are allocated.

Decisions on the allocation of delegated budgets must be made in accordance with the rules for voting on matters delegated to the Area Committee by the Council.

Details of the expenditure incurred annually by the Area Committee must be recorded in the Annual report.

Service Delivery

The Council's approach to service delivery is primarily about a cultural change which will get rid of unnecessary layers of decision making and make Council services more responsive to the local and personal needs of people resulting in a better quality of life. To do this the Council is focussing on the following principles:-

- Local people have **rights** to receive high quality public services and **responsibilities** to play their own role as good citizens;
- There will be **freedom and flexibility** to choose the delivery of certain public services in a way that better meets geographic circumstances;
- Certain public services will be **personalised** to suit individual needs; and
- All people who receive and deliver public services are entitled to be treated with **respect**.

Whilst the Area Committees have no executive responsibility for service delivery they can examine, express views and influence services delivered by the Council or its partners in their areas. The Area Committee can make a recommendation in respect of service delivery matters for consideration by Officers of the Council, the Council's Cabinet or the Oldham Partnership as appropriate.

Arrangements for Public Attendance and Participation

Public Access to the Area Committees

All of the proceedings of Area Committees are held in public unless there is a need to exclude the press and public for reasons permitted.

Members of the public are welcome to attend Area Committee meetings and at the invitation of the Chair to comment about local decisions made by the Area Committee and to contribute to the discussions at Area Committees about matters of local interest.

The Chair will encourage involvement and contributions from members of the public when appropriate. However, the Chair may use his/her discretion at any time on the appropriate way to conduct business.

Public Question Time

Area Committees have a public question time where residents are encouraged to submit questions in writing in advance so that there is time to prepare an answer. Questions can be submitted to the Neighbourhood Managers Team prior to meetings or to the Chair at the start of meetings of the Area Committee.

Venues

In compiling proposals for meetings of Area Committees, the Chairs and Officers shall seek potential venues which are easily accessible and fit for purpose.

Relationship with Overview & Scrutiny and Area Action Teams

Overview & Scrutiny

The Council has an Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) function to enable Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet to advise the Cabinet on future decisions and policies of the Council and to challenge decisions that have already been taken where they have concerns.

Area Committees cannot undertake the Overview and Scrutiny functions themselves, but they can work with Overview and Scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny may seek Area Committees' views on particular issues and invite them to present findings to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. Area Committees are also able to identify issues of local or general concern and recommend that Overview and Scrutiny should look into them.

However, Area Committees can operate in an informal Overview and Scrutiny role by discussing items at the Area Committee meetings and including question and answer sessions that involve members of the public.

Area Action Teams

There are Six Area Action Teams across the borough which aim to better co-ordinate how different organisations work together at an area level to tackle local problems.

The remit of the Area Action Teams is primarily to work at improving the quality of life of local residents and the people of the borough by targeting problems such as burglary, theft, anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and graffiti.

Meetings of each Area Action Team are co-ordinated and chaired by the relevant Neighbourhood Manager for that area working with the police Area Inspector. In addition, each Area Action Team involves Councillors.

The Area Action Team typically comprises of the following representation:

- Councillors and Neighbourhood Manager
- Environmental Services; Street Scene, Trading Standards
- Youth Service and other youth agencies
- Regeneration
- The Police and Community Safety Unit
- The Fire Service
- First Choice Homes Oldham and other housing providers
- Health related agencies e.g. Oldham Primary Care Trust and Drugs & Alcohol services

The Area Action Teams also work towards specific targets set out in the Area Committee Action Plans with a report on the work of each Area Action Team being included in the Neighbourhood Manager's report to each relevant Area Committee meeting.

Standards and Conduct

Conduct by the public at Area Committee meetings

Area Committees are established to bring members of the public closer to the making of decisions about their area. With that purpose, it is essential that the meetings are conducted purposefully, and with mutual respect amongst all parties. To allow smooth running of the Area Committee meetings the Chair's ruling at any time may not be questioned and is final.

If any person interrupts the proceedings, the Chair can

- Warn the person that his/her conduct is interrupting the proceedings and that this could result in them being asked to leave;
- Ask any persons present to leave the meeting if s/he considers their conduct to be detrimental to the meeting. Such persons must leave when requested to do so by the Chair or their attendance at future meetings may not be permitted;
- Order that the room in which the meeting is taking place is cleared completely and the meeting suspended.

If a member of the public refuses to leave when asked to do so after being warned, he/she may be treated as trespassing on Council premises and the Council can use reasonable force to stop the person trespassing.

Standards of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted members

Councillors and Co-opted members must comply with the agreed requirements of the adopted Code of Conduct for Councillors and the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations at all times.

All Councillors and co-optees must return a signed Code of Conduct within 28 days of taking up office or their selection is void.

Further information

Further and more detailed information regarding the Area Committees is available in the Council's Constitution; on the Oldham Council website at www.oldham.gov.uk/council/area-committees; or from the Neighbourhoods Team on 0161 770 4720 and at neighbourhood.managers@oldham.gov.uk.