

LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES

LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES (ONE PER ELECTORAL WARD)

A REMIT

- 1 (a) To be a forum for the discussion of ward issues, and

(b) To facilitate community engagement at the ward level;
- 2 To act as a focus for frontline council staff;
- 3 To scrutinise council policies at ward level;
- 4 To make representations and comments on ward issues to the Council; and
- 5 To take decisions binding on the Council and to exercise powers and responsibilities in policy areas and within limits and guidelines delegated from time to time by Council, Council or Education Executives.

B MEMBERSHIP

- 1 The three or four Elected Members for the relevant electoral ward.
- 2 The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed by the Council.
- 3 Every community council in West Lothian is entitled to send one representative to meetings of the Local Area Committee for the ward or wards in which their community is situated. In addition, each Local Area Committee is able to invite such other parties (including additional community council representatives) as it deems appropriate to attend its meetings or send representatives, either on a regular or an *ad hoc* basis. Representatives of community councils and those attending at the Committee's invitation are not entitled to move motions or amendments or to vote, and the extent to which they are to be permitted to participate in the business of the Committee is to be determined by the Chair.

C QUORUM AND VOTING

- 1 The quorum for all Local Area Committees shall be three Members, regardless of the number of Members in the ward.
- 2 In the event that a quorum is not present then so long as two Members are present, the meeting may proceed and its business may be transacted, but the resolutions made at the meeting shall require to be reported by the Lead Officer to the Council Executive for ratification before becoming effective.
- 3 No meeting shall take place and no business shall be transacted at a meeting of a Local Area Committee if only one Member is present.
- 4 Voting shall be conducted in accordance with Standing Order 16 and Standing Order 3, as appropriate.

D SUBSTITUTES

- 1 Substitutes are not permitted at meetings of Local Area Committees.

E MEETINGS (SUBJECT TO STANDING ORDER 41)

- 1 Arrangements are to be made for initial meetings by Council at its first meeting after each local government election. At those initial meetings each Local Area Committee

shall agree a schedule of regular meetings for the following calendar year and submit those arrangements to the Council Executive for approval. In each succeeding year, each Local Area Committee shall on or before 30 April agree a schedule of regular meetings for the succeeding twelve months and shall submit those arrangements to the Council Executive for approval.

- 2 In addition to the schedule of regular meetings, each Local Area Committee shall have the power to fix such additional meetings as it shall deem appropriate from time to time.
- 3 The Chair shall have the power to call a special meeting, which shall be convened and shall be governed by the terms of Standing Order 5. Other Members have no right to call a special meeting.
- 4 The preparation of the agenda for each meeting shall be carried out by the Lead Officer in consultation with the Chair, and the arrangements for doing so, including any pre-meeting, shall be as determined by the Chair in consultation with the Lead Officer and the Clerk.
- 5 Meetings shall be held as physical, hybrid or remote-access meetings, in accordance with SO41. Local Area Committees may resolve that the physical location of meetings convened as hybrid or physical meetings shall be elsewhere than the council chamber, subject to the agreement of the Clerk.
- 6 Where 2 metre physical distancing precautions apply in the Civic Centre, the maximum number of members entitled to be physically present for a physical or hybrid meeting shall be the Chair plus 8 more, comprising 2 SNP members, 2 Labour members, 2 Conservative members, the Independent member and the Liberal Democrat member, as appropriate, to be seated in the outer circle
- 7 Where 1 metre physical distancing precautions apply in the Civic Centre, the maximum number of members entitled to be physically present for a physical or hybrid meeting shall be the Chair plus 8 more, comprising 2 SNP members, 2 Labour members, 2 Conservative members, the Independent member and the Liberal Democrat member, as appropriate, to be seated in the outer circle
- 8 Where no physical distancing precautions apply in the Civic Centre, there are no restrictions on the number of members who may be physically present for a physical or hybrid meeting.

D REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 1 Minutes will be reported to the next meeting of each Local Area Committee for approval in accordance with Standing Order 12.
- 2 Any recommendation or representation to be made to Council, or Council or Education Executives, shall be noted and reported or communicated as appropriate by the Lead Officer on behalf of the Committee.

E MISCELLANEOUS

- 1 Local Area Committees were established as a specific type of working group, without decision-making powers, with a general consultative and advisory remit. Subsequently, they were reconstituted as Committees of the Council, retaining their initial remit but acquiring decision-making powers in specified areas from Council or Council or Education Executives.

- 2 Except where specific powers are delegated from time to time, Local Area Committees do not have power to make decisions for or on behalf of the Council, nor to speak for or make representations on behalf of the Council. Their actions and decisions are always subject to Standing Order 35.
- 3 Each Local Area Committee has a Lead Officer appointed by the Chief Executive. The Lead Officer's role is:-
 - to assist in the planning of the Committee's work and meetings
 - to build and prepare agendas in conjunction with the Chair and Clerk
 - to arrange for the preparation and submission of reports and other papers for meetings
 - to carry out routine correspondence on behalf of the Committee in connection with its meetings and business
 - to co-ordinate discussion
 - to submit reports as required to Council or Council or Education Executives on behalf of the Committee
 - to assist in the implementation of its business
 - to advise the Chair and Members, in conjunction with the Clerk, of the Committee's powers and remit and the limitations on them
- 4 Through the Lead Officers, the Committee is able to call on the services of officers of the Council to attend its meetings and provide reports, comment or advice on its business.
- 5 In exercising any aspect of its scrutiny function, Local Area Committees should have regard to the scrutiny functions of the Performance and Audit and Governance Committees and the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels and should plan their business in a way which avoids duplication of the work of those bodies.
- 6 Local Area Committees should take steps to ensure the most effective and efficient conduct of their business, and in particular should have regard to the pressures of time on council officers and whether their attendance at meetings is always required.