

SECTION 9

LOCAL MEMBER FOCUS EVENTS

1. Role and Purpose of Local Member Focus Events

- 1.1 The County Council is committed to involving local communities in the development of its services to drive improvements and ensure that they meet residents' needs in line with the Council's identified priorities. The role of elected County Councillors is crucial to this work as champions of their communities, identifying local priorities and influencing and shaping services to meet these needs.
- 1.2 To support this commitment the County Council has established four Local Member Focus Events as a means for County Councillors to consider and investigate local issues in a public forum. The broad terms of reference for these events will be:-
- Investigating local priorities for which the County Council is responsible;
 - Supporting the ongoing shaping of locality commissioning plan; and
 - Promoting and engaging local people and communities in the debate about local needs and the balance between public service and personal responsibility.

2. Membership

- 2.1 The Local Member Focus Events are not Committees of the County Council and are therefore not subject to the formal Political Balance requirements. They will be established on a 'double-district' basis and will be made up of the County Councillors from the following District Council areas:-
- **North West** – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Stafford Borough Council
 - **North East** – East Staffordshire Borough Council
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
 - **South West** – Lichfield District Council
Tamworth Borough Council
 - **South East** – Cannock Chase District Council
South Staffordshire District Council
- 2.2 Each Local Member Focus Event will have a Chairman and Vice-Chairman appointed by the County Council from the non-Executive Members of the County Council. The role of the Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) will be to preside at meetings and lead on determining the agenda for meetings and the ongoing work programme, with appropriate support.
- 2.3 Members of the Cabinet will be Members of their relevant Local Member Focus Events and will be entitled to attend and speak but must be aware of potential conflicts of interest, particularly on items that directly affect their portfolio. When such a conflict of interest arises the Cabinet Member must leave the room and not take part in the proceedings.

3. Meetings

- 3.1 Local Member Focus Events will take place on a quarterly basis, at a time and venue determined by the Chairman, who will normally preside at the meeting. If the Chairman is unable to attend, the Vice-Chairman will preside or, if the Vice-Chairman is also unable to attend, one of the Members present will be elected to preside. The meetings will be informal in style and the Chairman (or whoever is presiding) will have wide discretion and the final say in the running of the meeting.
- 3.2 The provisions of the Members Code of Conduct relating to Declarations of Interest will apply to Local Focus Event meetings and Members must withdraw from discussions where they have a prejudicial interest.
- 3.3 The Quorum for Local Member Focus Events will be one quarter of the total membership.
- 3.4 Although the Local Focus Events are not formal committee meetings or strictly subject to the Access to Information Procedure Rules the meetings will be widely publicised. Agendas for the meetings will also be published on the Council's website and any reports made available in advance of the meetings. Members of the public will be entitled to attend the meetings and use may be made of the Council's webcasting facilities to promote wider involvement.
- 3.5 From time to time, Members of the Local Focus Event may meet in private to discuss confidential items. Such items will be clearly marked as confidential on the agenda and members of the public will be excluded from that part of the meeting.
- 3.6 The Local Focus Events shall ask Cabinet Members to attend their meetings to discuss issues relating to their portfolio responsibilities as well as Officers of the Council. The Focus Events may also invite representatives of partner organisations, local groups and members of the public to attend and participate in their proceedings as appropriate.

4. Agenda items and Work programme

- 4.1 The Chairman will be responsible (with support from Officers) for drawing up a work programme for each of the Local Member Focus Events. This work programme will reflect the key local issues relating to the achievement of County Council's strategic priorities. The work programme will be published on the Council's website and considered at each meeting, when there will be an opportunity for the other Members to comment on it and suggest further items.
- 4.2 In addition, any Member may request that a particular item be added to the agenda of their next Local Focus Event. The Chairman will consider this request and notify the Member whether the item will be considered at the next meeting. If the Chairman decides that the item should not be considered at the next meeting they will notify the Member of the reasons why.
- 4.3 Local Member Focus Events will also actively seek suggestions for issues for the work programme from the local communities within the relevant area. It will be for each Local Focus Event to determine the best approach to gather suggestions from local groups and members of the public, but this may include publicising the

opportunity to make suggestions on the Council's websites and social media platforms or holding an open forum at a designated Local Focus Event.

- 4.4 Other sources of work programme and agenda items may include referrals from the Cabinet or Select Committees, the Council's Senior Leadership Team and information from the relevant District Commissioning Leads.

5. Relationships with Select Committees and Cabinet

- 5.1 The Local Member Focus Events are not part of the Council's scrutiny arrangements; however there will be key linkages between their work, particularly when investigating the local impact of Council decisions, and the work of the Select Committees.
- 5.2 The Select Committees may commission individual Local Member Focus Events to undertake pieces of work to inform a particular scrutiny review they are undertaking. In these circumstances, the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee and the Chairman of the Local Focus Event will agree the approach and timescale for the piece of work between themselves.
- 5.3 Items of work commissioned by Select Committees will be clearly identified on the agenda for meetings and Members of the Cabinet on the Local Focus Event will not be eligible to participate in these items and must leave the room during the discussion.
- 5.4 The Local Focus Events may also wish to refer particular items of concern to Select Committees for investigation. In these circumstances, the Chairman will refer the individual item to the relevant Select committee and report the referral to the next meeting of the Corporate Review Committee. In addition to this, all of the Local Focus Event Chairmen will be Members of the Corporate Review Committee, which will receive regular updates on the work of the Local Focus Events.
- 5.5 Ordinarily, issues of concern to the Local Focus Events should be reported to the Select committees as outlined above. However, in exceptional circumstances (for example if a decision only affects the area covered by the Local Focus Event or there is not enough time for a formal referral to scrutiny) a Local Focus Event may make direct representations to the Cabinet on a decision that is due to be taken. These must be made in writing and the Cabinet should consider any such representations before making their decision.
- 5.6 The Cabinet may also commission the Local Focus Events to undertake work on their behalf (for example consultation with local communities) to gather information prior to decisions being taken. The Chairman will consider such requests and add them to the work programme if appropriate. If it is not possible to accommodate such a request from the Cabinet, the Chairman will advise them of the reasons why the request cannot be met. At the conclusion of such work, the Local Focus Events will report their findings to the Cabinet who should take account of the report and any recommendations prior to taking decisions.
- 5.7 Items of work commissioned by the Cabinet will be clearly identified on agendas and Members of the Cabinet should carefully consider any potential conflicts of interest before deciding if it is appropriate for them to participate in the discussion on these items.