

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATING CONVENTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire's Local Area Agreement (LAA) is based on a commitment to work in partnership and bring workstreams, funding and strategies together to ensure public services are delivered as effectively as possible. The LAA covers four service blocks: children and young people; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities and older people; and economic development and enterprise.
- 1.2 The LAA Board, now known as Cambridgeshire Together, has been established to lead the delivery of the LAA. Cambridgeshire Together is accountable to the people of Cambridgeshire and has a stated aim to be open and transparent in its decisions and activities and communicate them effectively to the public. One way of ensuring this is to make effective arrangements for scrutiny. It is for this reason that an LAA Joint Accountability Committee (JAC) is being established.

2. ROLE OF THE JAC

- 2.1 The purpose of the JAC is to scrutinise Cambridgeshire Together at a strategic level to ensure that:
- Services are being delivered through the LAA as effectively as possible
 - Public funding spent through the LAA is being used as efficiently as possible
 - The achievements of the LAA are greater than if partners were delivering services separately.
- 2.2 The JAC will do this by:
- Monitoring performance information; where performance targets are not being met, the reasons for this will be explored
 - Receiving financial reports on expenditure through the LAA, including reasons for any exceptions to planned expenditure
 - Contributing to and commenting upon the annual revisions and changes to the LAA known as the LAA Refresh process.

3. POWERS

- 3.1 The JAC will have a number of powers to enable it to achieve its objectives. It will be able to:
- Require both members of Cambridgeshire Together and officers employed by partners to the LAA to attend its meetings and answer questions
 - Require information both from Cambridgeshire Together and from partner organisations
 - Make recommendations to Cambridgeshire Together and require a written response, detailing which recommendations are accepted and which not, and for those not accepted, the reasons why
 - Suggest topics to relevant partner organisations' Scrutiny Committees for more detailed investigation. It will be up to the Scrutiny Committee concerned to decide whether to add any such topics to its work programme.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Partners to the LAA will appoint members to the JAC as follow:

Cambridge City Council	One member
East Cambridgeshire District Council	One member
Fenland District Council	One member
Huntingdonshire District Council	One member
South Cambridgeshire District Council	One member
Cambridgeshire Police Authority	One member (who must be one of the Local Authority appointed members)
Cambridgeshire County Council	Five members, to include one each from the Council's four Scrutiny Committees

4.2 Each organisation will be responsible for selecting its representatives. All representatives must be democratically elected and must belong to a Scrutiny Committee within the organisation they are representing. Members of Cambridgeshire Together and of any of Cambridgeshire's five Local Strategic Partnerships are ineligible for membership of the JAC. Members who belong to the executive of one partner to the LAA and a Scrutiny Committee of a different partner will be entitled to sit on the JAC as a representative of the latter but will need to be alert to potential conflicts of interest and declare these when appropriate.

4.3 Each organisation will be entitled to appoint one substitute for each of its members on the JAC. The same eligibility criteria will apply for substitutes as for members.

5. CO-OPTees

5.1 The JAC may appoint up to three people at any one time as non-voting co-opted members. Co-options may be made only if the person co-opted has particular knowledge or expertise relevant to the work of the JAC. In making an appointment, the JAC will specify whether the co-option is effective for a specified period, for specific meetings or for specific items.

5.2 The JAC may not co-opt anyone who is an active member of a political party.

6. CHAIRMANSHIP

6.1 The JAC will elect its Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually, with an expectation that each of these post-holders will serve for two years.

6.2 The Chairmanship will alternate between the County Council and the District Councils/Police Authority, with the Vice-Chairman representing the opposite organisation(s) to that represented by the Chairman.

7. QUORUM

7.1 The quorum for all meetings of the JAC will be four members, two County Council representatives and two District/Police Authority representatives.

8. VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

8.1 Any matter requiring a vote will be determined by a simple majority of those present and voting. If the votes cast are equal, then the Chairman will have a second, casting vote.

9. FREQUENCY AND VENUE OF MEETINGS

9.1 The JAC will meet twice a year.

9.2 Venues for meetings will be arranged and paid for by the Democratic Services team at Cambridgeshire County Council and will always be within the County.

10. OFFICER SUPPORT

10.1 Cambridgeshire County Council will provide staffing support for two meetings per year from its Democratic Services and Scrutiny teams.

10.2 The Scrutiny Development Co-ordinator will:

- Manage the work of the Committee
- Liaise with the Policy and Diversity team at the County Council, who are responsible for co-ordinating work on the LAA
- Undertake small amounts of research where necessary
- Keep the Chairman of the JAC briefed between formal Committee meetings.

10.3 The Democratic Services Officer will:

- Arrange meeting dates and venues
- Co-ordinate agenda preparation and dispatch
- Attend meetings to take the minutes and to provide procedural advice.

11. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND INVOLVEMENT

11.1 Meetings of the Committee shall be open to the press and public and the agenda, reports and minutes will be available for inspection at Cambridgeshire County Council's offices and on the County Council's website at least five working days in advance of each meeting. [This excludes items of business containing confidential information or information that is exempt from publication in accordance with Access to Information legislation.] Other participating local authorities may make links from their website to the JAC's papers on Cambridgeshire County Council's website.

11.2 The JAC will publish an annual work plan of issues to be considered and an annual report of what has been scrutinised.

11.3 Subject to 11.4 below, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions at meetings of the JAC, with up to 15 minutes set aside at the beginning of each meeting for this purpose. The following guidelines will apply:

- If the question concerns a matter that is on the agenda for the meeting, then the speaker should register their intention to speak with the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. If the matter is not on the agenda, then notice of the question must be given to the DSO by 10.00am on the working day preceding the meeting.
- All questions must be clear and concise and relevant to the work of the JAC. If the Chairman feels that a question is not relevant to the work of the JAC, he or she may advise the member of public on alternative means of pursuing the issue.
- There is a time limit of 3 minutes per questioner, with a further two minutes for a supplementary question, the time to include responses to questions.

- Questions should be addressed to the Chairman, who will either answer the question directly or refer the matter to another person present at the meeting. If it is not possible to answer the question orally at the meeting, the Chairman may ask an officer to send a written response.
- Questions must not contain offensive or defamatory expressions or divulge confidential or exempt information.

11.4 The Chairman will retain the right to vary this facility at his or her discretion.

12. PRESS STRATEGY

12.1 Agendas for all meetings will be sent to the local media.

12.2 Cambridgeshire County Council will be responsible for issuing press releases on behalf of the JAC and dealing with any press enquiries. Press releases issued on behalf of the JAC will be agreed with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman and circulated to all JAC members.

13. MEMBERS' CONDUCT

13.1 Councillors and members of the Police Authority must abide by their Code of Conduct. Meetings of the JAC will be treated as official Committee meetings for the purpose of the rules about declarations of interest.