

Council

28 October 2020

Briefing Paper by Cllr Andrew Moore

Subject: Governance Working Group update

- 1 On 8th January 2020 the Council agreed to establish a Governance Working Group with the following core purpose:

“carry out a comprehensive review of Council governance arrangements in order to identify the different options available to bring together best practice and develop a model tailored to the needs and aspirations of Mid Devon’s residents and stakeholders. Such review to include –

- (i) exploring the views of members and other stakeholders;*
- (ii) taking advice where appropriate from experts in the field; and*
- (iii) identifying the cost and value for money implications”*

- 2 The first meeting (in person) was held on 27th January 2020 and there have been 3 subsequent meetings. The work of the group has been supported throughout by the Local Government Association – Emily McGuinness of the LGA and Cllr Jim McKenna (Independent) of Cornwall Council. Cllr Ashley Wilce was chosen as Chairman and Cllr Andrew Moore as Vice Chairman - Cllr Wilce subsequently stepped away from the Working Group and Cllr Moore was asked to become the Chairman and Cllr Andi Wyer the Vice Chairman.
- 3 It is fair to say that progress has not been as quick as some would like, hampered in part by the pandemic and getting meetings going remotely. The Group did some initial work on parameters/expectations and has been presented with information about alternative models.
- 4 Initial internal consultation with members (and some senior officers) has been undertaken, although the number of member responses was disappointing – just 15 out of 39 members. At that stage (and from that small sample), it appeared that members were not necessarily looking for wholesale change – however, it is recognised that further engagement is needed to draw out more in depth views, as well as to explain more about the potential options available. For that reason, a member workshop is being planned to take place in November and the Group very much hopes that all Members will attend. Further information will be given in WIS.

- 5 An external consultation exercise will be launched before the end of the month. The plan is to hold a hosted event via Zoom, as well as enabling written responses. Publicity will ask for expressions of interest and the precise format will depend on numbers responding. However, at this stage the Group anticipates that a timed slot will be allocated after an initial presentation. The Group is particularly interested in what works well and what can work better.

- 6 The Group will then reconvene in December to consider the views gathered from internal and external participants. Unless the Group considers further engagement or research is needed, it will then draw together a report with recommendations. Due to the impact of the pandemic and consequential delays, the Group does not expect to be able to report back in line with Council's deadline of December 2020. Instead, the Group intends to report back by the end of March 2021, if necessary with a request to the Chairman of the Council to call an extraordinary meeting for that purpose. Council is asked to note the revised timetable and, whilst regretted, it is hoped that this slight delay will be acceptable.

Cllr Andrew Moore
19th October 2020