

FULL COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2021

GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP – PROGRESS UPDATE

Reason for the report: To update Council on Governance Working Group progress.

The Full Council meeting on 6 January 2021 ratified the Governance Working Group's way forward based on 7 key conclusions from Group's activities to that date, notably including the outcome of internal and external consultation events. This report provides an update on work since that date.

A further meeting was held by the Working Group on 28 January 2021 at which the Monitoring Officer presented a paper providing options for discussion based on the agreed way forward. These were:

1. To continue with the current arrangements but enhance the scrutiny process; or,
2. To replace the 4 Policy Development Groups plus a Scrutiny Committee with one or more Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

After discussion it was agreed that a more detailed proposal be provided by Officers in consultation with the LGA for the second option. This was to look at 2 Overview & Scrutiny Committees addressing Corporate and Community topics respectively. The inclusion of a Programming Board to manage the work between the 2 Committees plus a Joint Overview & Scrutiny meeting to consider items of joint interest would also be developed. Working Groups could continue in the guise of Task & Finish Groups to support the work of the Committees.

This approach was considered to be worth exploring in more detail, as it appeared to offer the opportunity to improve Member involvement, improve cross-discipline working without unnecessary overlap, and enhance decision making through early engagement in the process. It was also thought that routine policy updates might become Cabinet Member responsibilities to allow the Committees to focus on matters of more criticality.

Member support for a new approach was recognised as crucial. Subsequent to the meeting the Monitoring Officer has started work and will contact the Chairs of Scrutiny Committee, Audit Committee and the 4 Policy Development Groups for input in due course.

As planned, the Working Group is scheduled to meet again on 2 March 2021 where more detailed proposals will be discussed. All Members are welcome to contribute to that meeting. The aim remains to bring a recommendation to an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 17 March 2021.