

Report for: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 March 2024
Subject:	Governance – Proposed Changes to Policy Development Groups
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Luke Taylor, Leader
Responsible Officer:	Maria de Leburne – Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To provide Members with a proposed change to the Policy Development Groups (PDG) and the proposed required amendments to the Constitution.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. Standards Committee to recommend to Full Council that there be five (5) Policy Development Groups: Planning, Environment & Sustainability; Community, People & Equalities; Homes; Economy & Assets; Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement.**
- 2. Standards Committee recommend to Full Council that the Constitution is amended to reflect the changes to the PDGs.**
- 3. That the Standards Committee recommend to Full Council that delegated authority is provided to the Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer) to amend the Constitution as per the above and any other amendments required to reflect the new PDGs.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

In recent years the council has considered a number of changes to its governance and arrangements, including through working groups, externally-facilitated advisory sessions, and debates at council. Most recently, at Full Council on the 1 November 2023, Option D was approved with an amendment that *‘This Council moves to a more robust implementation of the Hybrid system, utilising the Policy Development Groups and the Programming Panel to better develop policy and set strategic direction.’*

This report forms part of the journey of changing the council’s system of governance.

2.0 Background

2.1 The previous administration on the 8 January 2020 resolved to set up a politically balanced working group to review the governance arrangements of the council. The group consisted of 12 members and carried out a comprehensive review of the council’s governance arrangements with a view that any changes could take effect for the municipal year 2021/22.

2.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) assisted the working group and the wider membership of the council was also encouraged to be involved. External consultation was also carried out with a panel-led session in November 2020 which 6 members of the public registered to attend and 5 actually doing so. In January 2021 seven conclusions were agreed by Council and other themes were considered in March 2021.

2.3 The recommendations from the working group were put to an Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 17 March 2021 and it was carried that in the absence of a clear mandate for change at this time, the council keeps the current executive governance arrangements; and also that they endorsed the continuation of the PDGs and in doing so, requests members and officers to find effective ways to support the groups future work programmes.

3.0 Proposed Changes

3.1 Hybrid system

3.1.1 As per Full Council’s approval on the 1 November 2023, work has been carried out in relation to a more robust implementation of the hybrid system, utilising the Policy Development Groups and the Programming Panel to better develop policy and set strategic direction.

3.2 New PDGs

3.2.1 It is recommended that the names of the current PDGs change to reflect the aims of the new the Corporate Plan and that there be an additional PDG, so instead of four (4) there will be five (5) PDGs. It is proposed that the PDGs will be renamed as follows:

- Planning, Environment & Sustainability;
- Community, People & Equalities;
- Homes;
- Economy & Assets;
- Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement

3.3 Each PDG will continue to have a different remit as set out below.

3.3.1 Planning, Environment & Sustainability - To be a leader and pioneer of best climate practice so new innovation and thinking is at the heart of the services we deliver and informs our planning policies.

3.3.2 Community, People & Equalities - Involving and engaging with our communities, ensuring everyone is treated with equity and respect, and protecting our most vulnerable.

3.3.3 Homes - Delivering new affordable and social homes annually, improving and maintain the existing stock to world class standards.

3.3.4 Economy & Assets - Growing the District Economy and increasing returns from our assets.

3.3.5 Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement - Delivering Council services that residents want in the right way, in the right place and at the right price.

3.4 PPAG (Planning Policy Advisory Group) and DDAG (Development Delivery Advisory Group) along with the Net Zero Advisory Group will remain separate to the PDGs.

3.5 Constitution Changes

3.5.1 PDGs are outlined within the Constitution on pages 23-25. This will need to be amended to reflect the new titles of the PDGs and the additional fifth PDG as below.

Group	Thematic Area
Planning, Environment & Sustainability	Waste collection and Recycling, Street cleaning, Trade Waste, Clinical Waste, Climate change, reduction of carbon footprint, Parks

	and Open Spaces, Cemeteries, Trees, environmental enforcement (vehicles, animal control, fly tipping, fly posting), flood defence and drainage, clocks and monuments, street naming and numbering, public conveniences, Grounds maintenance – grass cutting
Community, People & Equalities	Any matters that impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of people (e.g. air quality, pollution, noise), Public health, Environmental Health (e.g. food standards, water quality), Leisure, Grants funding, Town and Parish fund updates, Presentations from grant funded organisations, Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, Community engagement and consultation, Equalities, Health and Safety, Town and Parish Councils (charter), Anti-social behaviour, Community safety, Digital transformation – broadband, Local welfare assistance, Benefits, Presentations from local interest groups such as Drink Wise Age Well, Youth Services, Older Persons strategy, Updates from the clinical commissioning group, RIPA, Targeted families
Homes	Council Housing, Housing Strategy, Housing policies, Neighbourhood and tenancy management, tenant involvement, homelessness prevention, housing needs and allocations, housing enabling, HRA budget, HRA capital programme and planned maintenance, Building maintenance, Devon Home Choice, Asbestos management, Community Housing support, Update on affordable housing projects, Updates on legislative changes or guidance from the HCA, Private Sector Homes, Bringing back empty homes into use, DFGs
Economy & Assets	Economic Development, Inward Investment, Business support and development, Tourism, Town

	Centres, Markets, local and national economy, Town Team updates, CCTV, Car Parking, Business Rates updates, Commercial units property updates, Night time economy (could include references to licencing and anti-social behaviour), Funding bids and updates, High Street Innovation Fund, Project updates on heritage projects, arts projects and food and drink projects which link to the local economy
Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement	Front Line Services of MDDC; operational efficiency and effectiveness

3.6 Page 49 of the Constitution will also need to be amended to incorporate the new names of the PDGs and include the new fifth PDG being Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement which will also have nine (9) members and meet every other month.

3.7 That the Standards Committee delegate to the Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer) to amend the Constitution as per the above and any other amendments required to reflect the new PDGs.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 That Standards recommend to Full Council the recommendations outlined at the outset of this report.

Financial Implications

There will be a small cost to the Council as each Chairman of Policy Development Groups receive a Special Responsibility Allowance which currently is £3000.

Legal Implications

If Council wishes to direct that changes be made to the Constitution/changing the PDGs this initially is considered by the Standards Committee and then will require Full Council's approval.

Risk Assessment

There is a clear risk that making a change to governance arrangements or making no change will be perceived as unsatisfactory, depending on any individual viewpoint. The key will be in how the Council then goes about making the arrangement work and/or work better. The Council has to decide as a collective, what it considers to be the best way forward.

Impact on Climate Change

None

Equalities Impact Assessment

None directly arising from this report, but impacts must be considered carefully in any decisions which result in a change to current practices affecting those with protected characteristics.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Our values and priorities – equally important to the ‘what’ we are trying to achieve, is the ‘how’ the organisation operates and conducts itself.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 29.2.24

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive

Date: 05/03/2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 05/03/2024

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Maria de Leiburne, Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Email: mdeleiburne@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers: None