

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

23rd June 2021

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| REPORT TITLE: | Change in Governance Arrangements: Update on Implementation |
| REPORT OF: | Director of Law and Governance |

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with an update in respect to the implementation of the change in governance arrangements following the adoption of a new Constitution by the Council at the Annual Meeting held on the 28th September 2020.

The report is divided into three parts:

- Implementation of the Committee programme
- Training Update
- Constitution Review and Work Programme

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Constitution and Standards Committee is recommended to :-

1. Consider and comment on the report and are further requested to nominate Members to sit on the Governance Working Group.
2. Request the Director of Law & Governance to convene meetings of the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the issues raised in section 3.3 of the report with a view to submitting an outcomes report to this Committee in Autumn 2021.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Committee are requested to comment on the implementation of the new Constitution and the change in governance arrangements thus far and to agree the appointment of a Governance Working Group to consider any proposed changes/updates to the Constitution so as to enable recommendations of that Group to be submitted to future meetings of the Constitution and Standards Committee for consideration.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not to appoint a Governance Working Group at the present time.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Implementation of the Committee Programme

Despite the challenges presented by the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Council was able to run a full programme of Council and Committee Meetings since the Annual Council Meeting in September 2020 through to the Elections in May 2021. Meetings were held remotely and Members and member of the public were enabled to fully participate in the democratic decision making process. In March 2021, following consultation with the Constitution & Standards Committee, the Council approved a Council and Committee Meeting programme for 2021/2022 based on the Policy & Resources Committee and Planning Committee meeting on a four-weekly cycle with the majority of the remaining Committees meeting on a six-weekly cycle.

Each of the Committees are supported by scheduled briefings between the Chair and Group Spokespersons with relevant Directors (and other Senior Officers) to inform agenda planning and Committee work programming. The frequency of such meetings is determined by the respective Chairs and Group spokespersons.

At the time of writing, Council and Committee meetings have started to meet in the Floral Pavilion commencing with Mayor Making on the 19th May 2021. All Meetings are held in accordance with the Floral Pavilion Risk Assessment and the Committee Meeting Risk Assessment which has been shared with all Members of the Council in order to offer Members peace of mind that the latest public health guidance is being followed.

3.2 Training Update

One of the key elements of the project plan for the change in governance arrangements was to implement a training programme for both Members and Officers.

Examples include:

- A focus on support new Committee Chairs and aspiring Committee Chairs.

- A re-modelling of the Member Steering Group and more frequent meetings of that Group
- The creation of a library of training materials for Members accessible through the Member Portal
- The production of member training booklet bringing together a variety of internal and external training opportunities for Members into one easy to use resource
- A restructure of Democratic and Member Services Officers to afford more support to the Member Learning and Development process
- The creation of a Report Authors Resource on the intranet – to support officers in the report writing process and a means to improve the consistency and quality of reports. Support by an Officer Group acting as a critical friend

The New Member Induction Programme was also reviewed earlier in the year in preparation for the Local Elections in May 21. As a result of the Elections, there were ten newly elected Councillors. The induction programme has almost wholly been run remotely this year with the exception of the first meeting where Members attended personally to sign their declaration of Office and meet with the Chief Executive. An outcomes/learning report will be presented to the Member Steering Group later this year and New Members will be consulted and views sought in respect to the running of the programme. Both will inform the plan for 2022

3.3 **Constitution Review**

Previously when undertaking work on the draft Constitution, Members of the Governance Working Group identified a number of issues which they wished to consider in greater detail after the Annual Council meeting. Officers have also identified issues that they would like Members to give further consideration to. With that in mind, the Constitution and Standards Committee are requested to nominate Members to sit on a Governance Working Group and further request the Director of Law and Governance to make arrangements for the that group to discuss the following:-

- Review of the Petition scheme/deadline for submission (The Committee has previously agreed that a report will be submitted to the September Meeting of the Committee)
- A discussion in respect to the Media Guidelines

A number of Members have asked that further consideration be given to the role of the Partnerships Committee. Members of the Committee are requested to identify any further issues that they would like the Working Group to consider.

There are also a number of issues which Council had previously requested the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider at an appropriate time, added to which a number of further requests have been raised with the Director of Law & Governance. The Committee are requested to agree to the issues detailed below and add any further issues that they would like the IRP to report back on:

- Special Responsibility Allowance for Vice Chairs
- Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of the Decision Review Committee

- The level of Special Responsibility Allowance for the Group Leaders who are not one of the three largest Groups
- To review the Travel and Subsistence Scheme
- The provision of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Independent Member of the Audit & Risk Committee

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Whilst there are no direct risks arising from this report, not appointing a Governance Working Group would have implications for Member oversight and engagement. Similarly, should the Independent Remuneration Panel not meet as requested by the Council, the further analysis/scrutiny of the Members' Allowances Scheme would be adversely affected.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Member have been engaged in respect to a number of the issues outlined in this report. Members will be fully consulted on any future changes to the Constitution and the intention is to increase the frequency of meetings of the Member Learning & Development Group.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct environment or climate implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Steve Fox
Head of Democratic and Member Services
stevefox@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Constitution

Member Learning & Development Booklet

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Annual Meeting | 28 th September 2020 |
| Constitution and Standards Committee | 25 th November 2020 |