

CABINET 9 DECEMBER 2009

221. GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management reported that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the Act”) required the Council to review its governance arrangements and move to either:

- a. a new style ‘Leader and Cabinet’ model; or
- b. a ‘directly elected Mayor and Cabinet’ model.

Before drawing up its governance proposals, the Council was required to take reasonable steps to consult local government electors and any other interested persons, in the authority’s area. The Council’s consultation period commenced on 6 October 2009 and ended on 30 November 2009 and the steps taken to consult local government electors and interested parties included:

- a. a press release placed in a local newspaper (Wirral Globe) on 8 October 2009 (although the press release was issued on 7 October 2009);
- b. the Council’s Website amended to advertise the new governance arrangements and invite local electors and other interested persons to make comments and express their views/opinions on the proposals;
- c. the Cabinet Report dated 24 September 2009 detailing the proposed governance arrangements were highlighted at all eleven Area Forums by the Chairperson and copies of the Report made available to the public.

Furthermore, both the Daily Post and Wirral News featured a discussion forum on the proposed governance arrangements; and Heart FM Radio, Severn Waves Radio and BBC Radio Merseyside all featured the proposed governance proposals. The Wirral Globe further published letters received in relation to the governance proposals on 29 October, 5, 11 and 18 November 2009. Such measures, articles and features had enabled this matter to maintain a reasonably high public profile during the period of consultation.

According to the Council’s PR and Marketing Department, the consultation undertaken by this Council was similar to that undertaken by other Merseyside Local Authorities.

The Council received a total of 45 responses during the consultation period and whilst it was acknowledged that there had been a low response rate, the Council had received a similar response to the consultation as other neighbouring Councils (and in one case a considerably greater response). The Director provided a summary of the responses and indicated that of the total number received, 62.2% [28 replies] had indicated a preference for the directly elected ‘Mayor and Cabinet’ model with 20% [9 replies] preferring the new style ‘Leader and Cabinet’ model. The remaining 17.8% of responses (8 replies) either failed to indicate a preference or their reply too ambiguous for a preference to be drawn.

The Director commented that given the limited number of responses received, the Council should give careful consideration to the level of weight that ought to be attached when deciding which model of governance it should adopt.

The Act required the Council adopt its new governance arrangements by 31 December 2009.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) That the Council adopts the new style ‘Leader and Cabinet’ model of governance (including provision of the power for Council to remove the Leader by resolution).**
- (2) That the Council approves the draft governance proposals as set out in Appendix 2 the report of the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management (subject to any amendments agreed by Council); and officers be authorised to undertake all steps necessary to give effect to the proposals and ensure compliance with the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007.**