



Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee
Tuesday, 25 February 2020

REPORT TITLE:	Update on Progress Made in Respect to the Change in Governance Arrangements
REPORT OF:	Director: Governance and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)

REPORT SUMMARY

The ongoing review of the Council's governance arrangements will result in the introduction of a different set of roles and responsibilities for Members. The report provides an update on work undertaken to support the change in governance arrangements in relation to:

- The Independent Remuneration Panel
- Training for Councillors and Officers
- A re-design of Democratic and Member Services
- The Committee Cycle 2020/2021

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Committee is requested to note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee are asked to note the ongoing work to support the implementation of the change in governance arrangements and the drafting of the Council's new Constitution.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 n/a

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Following the appointment of The Independent Remuneration Panel by the Council in January 2020, the Panel held their first meeting on 4th February 2020. The Panel considered a presentation by the Head of Democratic and Member Services in respect to the draft Council Constitution and they agreed a programme of work to support their meetings throughout February and March 2020. The Panel will meet with Group Leaders at their meeting scheduled for 26th February 2020. To further support and inform the work of the Panel, a survey was circulated to all members in January. The response rate was excellent with over 50 members participating. The results of the survey will be analysed and a detailed report submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.
- 3.2 Officers have worked with colleagues from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association on plans for training Members of the Council and Council Officers. An Initial Needs Assessment meeting was held on 5th February 2020, attended by members of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee and Group Leaders. All members of the Council have now been invited to attend one of three training sessions on 11th March 2020. A further bespoke training session for prospective Committee Chairs will be held on 25th March 2020. Group Office Managers have been asked to work with their groups and inform the Head of Democratic and Member Services of the names of those members who will attend this training.
- 3.3 Council Officers have been offered support and training in relation to the change in arrangements. The Director of Governance and Assurance has regularly updated the senior management team and has provided a number of lunch time drop in sessions for colleagues throughout the Council. It is intended to film one of the future drop in sessions so that it to be circulated to all Council employees via the Intranet. Additionally, the Centre for Public Scrutiny will hold a further training session for Senior Council Officers on 15th April 2020. The Head of Democratic and Member Services is currently working with colleagues in Organisational Development to provide training courses on the new decision making arrangements and report writing.
- 3.4 In respect to the re-design of Democratic and Member Services, the Head of Democratic and Member Services is currently formulating a new business plan, service structure and writing any associated job descriptions which will be subject to job evaluation/grading. All affected staff and trade unions will be consulted on any new proposals in due course.

- 3.5 In anticipation of the Constitution being formally adopted by the Council, a programme for Committee meetings is attached to this report for comment at Appendix 1. It is proposed that subject to any comments, the programme will be submitted to the Extraordinary Council meeting in April 2020 for approval.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel will receive a payment of £500 per annum and the other Panel members will be reimbursed for their travel and expenses.
- 4.2 The Centre for Public Scrutiny, working on behalf of the Local Government Association are providing training for all Members of the Council and the bespoke training session for prospective Chairs free of charge. Costs for the additional training session for Council Officers are yet to be confirmed.
- 4.3 At the present time, it is anticipated that there will be no additional staffing costs associated with the re-design of Democratic and Member Services.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In respect to the Independent Remuneration Panel, the Council has fulfilled its obligation to make an appointment of a Panel to review its Scheme of Members' Allowances in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 5.2 Whilst the IRP is required to make a recommendation, the IRP will consult all Political Group Leaders during each periodic review of Members' Allowances and then produce a written report for the Council to consider. It is the Council that decides whether or not to increase Members' allowances, not the IRP. It is anticipated that a scheme will be presented to an extra-ordinary Council meeting in April 2020 for approval.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 All staff affected by the re-design of Democratic and Member Services will be consulted as appropriate.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There is a risk that the Independent Remuneration Panel will not have sufficient time to present a scheme to the Council for approval. However, a number of meetings of the Panel have been programmed throughout February and March 2020 to mitigate against that risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Members of the Council and Group Leaders have been asked to respond to a survey, the results of which will support the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 8.2 Members of the Governance Working Group and Group Leaders were consulted as part of the Initial Needs Assessment for the Member Training Sessions.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. The work detailed in the report does not require an Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Environment and Climate implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Programme for Committee meetings

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
Minutes of the Constitutional Oversight Committee – 26 September 2016/26 November 2020
Minutes of the Council Meeting – 14 May 2019/13 January 2020

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee	26 Sept 2019 26 November 2020
Council	14 May 2019 13 January 2020