

CONSTITUTION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday 23 June 2022

REPORT TITLE:	DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT: WORKING EFFECTIVELY IN THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the actions taken in response to the findings detailed in the Working Effectively in the Committee System report which was produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) following a visit to Wirral Council in November/December 2021. That report can be seen at Appendix 1.

The actions taken in response to the findings can be viewed at Appendix 2.

The recommendations contained in the report aim to support Members in implementing all aspects of the Wirral Plan.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Constitution and Standards Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the report; and
2. Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Group spokespersons of Constitution and Standards Committee, to finalise the Council's response and submit it to the Local Government Association for consideration and feedback.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Following a review of Governance in 2019, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council at their Annual Full Council Meeting on 28 September 2020 formally moved from the Cabinet Leader Governance Model to the Committee System. The Council further approached the Local Government Association (LGA) in the summer of 2021 to give a view on whether the Committee System is working effectively, and to support improvement. This work was completed in November and December. The outcomes can be viewed at Appendix 1. The Council's response is detailed at Appendix 2.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No further options have been considered as the report is presented for consideration and comment to enable a full response to be sent to colleagues at the LGA.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The report issued by the LGA set out the context in which their work was completed following the publication of two assurance reports from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 2 November 2021 and the key issues highlighted, as well as the methodology undertaken through Sector Led Improvement. Their report also identified several considerations for the Council to take forward which may support improved effectiveness and efficiency within their Governance, and the delivery of wider recommendations identified through national Assurance Reports.
- 3.2 The LGA held sessions with the Political Groups as follows:
- 3 November 2021 – Discussion with Conservative Political Group.
 - 4 November 2021 – Discussion with Liberal Democrat Political Group.
 - 16 November 2021- Discussion with the Green Party-Political Group.
 - 18 November 2021 – Discussion with Independent Group Members.
 - 11 and 21 November 2021 – Discussions with Labour Political Group.
- 3.3 The full findings of the review can be viewed in the final report, however there were a number of key issues which are summarised below:
- There was widespread recognition and agreement that there was a need to reduce the number of Committees at the Council. Seven Policy and Service Committees creates challenges of coordination and increases the risk of fragmentation.
 - It was acknowledged that there is a need for Committees to prioritise issues most relevant to budget delivery, including prioritizing these issues within agendas and reports.
 - it was also recognised that one of the key factors which had frustrated local groups was the approach and use of Full Council Meetings. This frustration included recognition that this was not conducive to supporting the principles of collaboration or credibility, and that improvements in this forum would be beneficial to both relations across Groups and the Council's reputation.

- the length and structure of officer's reports. With this in-mind, the Council should set out a programme of report writing training and support learning from best practice across the sector. This training should encourage officers to prioritise and consistently present financial issues presenting information in a format that is easily understood by people who do not have a technical finance background.
- It was felt that many papers presented to Committee included delegated decisions which were being presented 'to note' and by considering wider sector-norms on these issues, the Council may benefit by supporting the empowerment of Officers, reducing the administrative burden, and allowing greater political focus on priority issues.

3.4 The suggested officer response to the findings is detailed at appendix 2 of the reports and members are invited to consider and comment on the proposed responses.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal implications associated with this report have been addressed and considered through the adoption of the revised Constitution at Annual Council on the 25th May 2022.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 All Members of the Council were sent a copy of the report and feedback issued by the LGA. Group Leaders were invited to comment on the initial draft before final publication.

8.2 Sessions were held between each Political Group and the LGA throughout November 2021.

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.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

11.1 There are no direct Community Wealth Building implications arising from the report.

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APPENDICES

1. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council: Working Effectively in the Committee System
2. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council: Draft response to the LGA Report: Working Effectively in the Committee System

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Local Government Finance Review – Wirral Council
External Assurance Review Governance - Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council	28 September 2020
Constitution and Standards Committee	17 February 2022
Constitution and Standards Committee	13 April 2022