

Report to Governance Committee

Monday 27 November 2023

By the Monitoring Officer

INFORMATION REPORT

Not Exempt



**Horsham
District
Council**

Planning Committee Review

Executive Summary

Officers are undertaking a review of the Council's Planning Committees to consider the suitability of existing arrangements. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Governance Committee of the review and the proposed areas for consideration.

Recommendations

That the Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

To raise awareness of the Planning Committee review.

Background Papers

Minutes of the March 2019 meeting of the Governance Committee

Minutes of the April 2019 meeting of Council

Wards affected: All

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Officers are undertaking a review of the Council's Planning Committees to consider the suitability of existing arrangements. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Governance Committee of the review and the proposed areas for consideration.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 Council Plan 2023-2027: "Always listening, learning and improving".

3 Details

- 3.1 The Planning Advisory Service undertook a Peer Review on the operation of the Council's Planning Committees in November 2018. Following that Peer Review, the Governance Committee made a number of recommendations to Council at its meeting on 19 March 2019. A copy of the minutes of that meeting is contained in Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 The recommendations made by the Governance Committee were considered by Council at its meeting on 24 April 2019 and a number of these were adopted. A copy of the minutes of that meeting is contained in Appendix B to this report.
- 3.3 One of the changes recommended by the Governance Committee was that "there should be a single Planning Committee comprising 18 Members". Council decided to retain the two area-based Planning Committees and a review of those arrangements is now being undertaken.
- 3.4 Scope of review

The review will consider all of the recommendations agreed by Council at its meeting on 24 April 2019, with a particular focus on the structure of the Planning Committees.

The following possible options will be considered:

- Retain the existing arrangements;
- Retain the two Planning Committees (one for the north and one for the south of the Horsham District) but reduce the number of Members sitting on them;
- Replace the Planning Committees with one Planning Committee (covering the whole of the Horsham District) comprised of fewer Members; and
- Replace the Planning Committees with two Planning Committees (one for 'major' applications and one for 'minor' applications) comprised of fewer Members.

The review will include consideration of the following areas:

- Composition
- Local Ward Member participation
- Public (and parish council/neighbourhood forum) participation

- Frequency and timing of meetings
- Mandatory training
- Mandatory site visits
- Pre-meetings for Planning Committee members

Dependent on the outcome of the review and any changes agreed by Council, the Independent Remuneration Panel may be instructed to undertake an interim review of the allowances applicable to members of the Planning Committee.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The review will be undertaken.
- 4.2 The Planning and Infrastructure Policy Development Advisory Group will be kept apprised of the progress of the review through its scheduled meetings.
- 4.3 All Members will have an opportunity to express their views at a workshop to be held in early 2024.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The Planning and Infrastructure Policy Development Advisory Group were briefed on the review on 31 October 2023. The suggestions made by members of the PDAG in relation to the scope of the review have been considered in the drafting of this report.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on the content of this report.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The alternative course of action is not to undertake the review. This has been rejected as it is good practice to keep arrangements under review, and it would be contrary to the commitment made by Council at its meeting on 24 April 2019 to review any changes made after 12 months.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The review will be undertaken using existing resources.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from undertaking the review.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no risks associated with undertaking the review.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 There are no procurement implications associated with undertaking the review.

11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 11.1 There are no apparent equalities or human rights implications associated with undertaking the review. Due regard to the public sector equality duty will be had when making any recommendations arising from the review.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 There are no environmental implications associated with undertaking the review.

13 Other Considerations

- 13.1 There are no apparent GDPR, data protection or crime and disorder consequences associated with undertaking the review.