

Report to Governance Committee

14 June 2017

By the Governance Project Manager

DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham
District
Council**

Not Exempt

One year review of the changes to governance arrangements introduced in 2016

Executive Summary

Full Council in April 2016 unanimously resolved a range of formal and informal enabling changes to the governance arrangements operating at the Council in 2015/16. Council further resolved that a review of the effectiveness of those changes to the Council's governance arrangements in be undertaken in 2017, after one year of operation. This report proposes a method to satisfy the resolution of Council.

Recommendations

That the Committee is recommended:

- i) To agree to the review method described in part four of this report and to circulate a questionnaire to all Members on 19 June 2017.
- ii) To agree a date for the Committee to meet in August 2017 to receive a report on the results of the questionnaire.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) To satisfy council resolution CO/96 that the changes to the governance arrangements introduced in 2016, be reviewed.

Background Papers

None.

Wards affected: All Wards.

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 provided Local Authorities an opportunity to review their governance arrangements. It effectively provides for two permissible forms of council governance i) executive arrangements (the Cabinet and Leader model) or ii) the Committee system. Following the election of a new Council in May 2015, the Leader undertook to facilitate a review of the Council's current and future governance arrangements. The review of the Council's governance arrangements was enabled in two parts: i) a Governance Group of members and ii) three all-member seminars – the final one being to hear and discuss the report and proposals of the Governance Group. Full Council unanimously resolved a range of formal and informal enabling changes to the governance arrangements operating in 2015.
- 1.3 The Governance Group met on 12 occasions and examined how governance arrangements worked in similar councils, visited other councils, received representations from experienced officers who had worked in all arrangements and invited any Members with a particular view on governance to address the Group. The Group also examined the role of Scrutiny which was a key component of the cabinet and leader model. The seminars explained the history of council governance, possible change considerations and how other councils worked. The seminar notes were circulated to all Members.
- 1.4 Having considered the alternatives to the existing arrangements and having heard the views of Members at two seminars, the Group was generally of the view that cabinet governance arrangements should be retained but modified. This was unanimously agreed by Full Council in April 2016. The modifications would include the appointment of a single politically balanced Policy Development Advisory Group (PDAG) comprising 11 Members for each Cabinet portfolio which would meet six times a year, with the membership and timetable of meetings for each PDAG being agreed at the annual Council meeting. A further report providing certainty on 'Key Decisions' was also unanimously agreed.
- 1.5 The Council report of 27 April 2017 (CO/96 refers) described five desired effects of the changes to governance as follows:
- **Member involvement:** Clear member advisory pathway at the earliest possible stage
 - **Efficiency:** Clearer key-decision making responsibilities
 - **Accountability:** Strong Scrutiny function. Clear line of cabinet member accountability
 - **Timely decision making:** Decisions, subject to advisory stage may be taken quickly
 - **Openness:** Published agendas, member attendance, and policy development advisory group conclusions, benefitting from 'thinking space meetings
- 1.6 This report proposes that the achievement of the five effects described in 1.5 be tested by an all-member questionnaire from the Governance Committee.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2016/19 has a Council priority of 'Efficiency - Great value services' which has been better enabled by clear, well understood and supported governance arrangements over the past year.

3 Details

- 3.1 Full Council agreed an improved constitution in December 2016 which created the Governance Committee.
- 3.2 Officers examined the review method (if any) used by councils that had recently changed their governance arrangements. Those that conducted a review after one year of operating the changed arrangements did so by questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed solely on the changes introduced as part of a governance review.
- 3.3 A questionnaire approach is broad enough to allow all-members to participate and document their views. The Governance Committee would then receive and consider the findings.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Subject to the agreement of the Committee, the following steps will take place.
- a) a questionnaire (a draft of which is attached as appendix a) be enabled electronically for Members to complete
 - b) four weeks from 19 June will be allowed for Members to give their views, 2 reminders will be provided and the questionnaire will close on 14 July 2017
 - c) Officers will collate responses and present a full report of the findings to the Governance Committee.

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

- 5.1 The Chairman of the Governance Committee (2016/17) was consulted on 31 May 2017, and agreed to the review method. The views of all members will form the consultation to be received, collated and presented to the Governance Committee.
- 5.2 Governance is a function of the Governance Committee, not the Cabinet. Therefore, the constitutional provisions relating to policy development advisory groups do not apply to this matter.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 A review must take place to satisfy the resolution of council.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The review will take place within existing resources.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 Full Council resolution CO/96 requires this review to be undertaken. The improved constitution agreed by Council in 2016 created the Governance Committee, consequentially aligning the responsibility for this review to the committee.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 This review of the changes to governance introduced in 2016 mitigates risk. The risk of the review taking too long, not being focussed or not concluding will be mitigated by the Chairman of the Committee with officer support.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 Due consideration has been given to Crime & Disorder; Human Rights; Equality & Diversity and Sustainability matters.