

Report to Governance Committee

12 June 2018

By the Monitoring Officer



DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Review of the Functions, Responsibilities and Constitution of Planning Committees at Horsham District Council.

Executive Summary

The Governance Committee is aware that the one major area that the constitutional review left for a later date was that of the function and responsibilities of the Planning Committees. I therefore propose to undertake a review that will look at whether the current structure, scheme of delegation and processes are efficient and effective and whether they meet the needs (current and future) of the Council and its customers. The review will also look at how decision making might be improved whilst allowing for democratic input into the process, relationships between officers and Members, and identifying good practice from elsewhere that may be transferable to Horsham District Council.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to approve a review of the Functions, Responsibilities and Constitution of Planning Committees at Horsham District Council.

Reasons for Recommendations

To comply with Article 13.2 Review and Revision of the Constitution.

Background Papers

The Constitution of Horsham District Council 7 December 2016 (Amended April 2017).

Wards affected: All

Contact: Sharon Evans, Monitoring Officer

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 It is proposed to undertake a review of the Planning Committee system we are following at present. The review would allow members to fully understand any alternatives or possible amendments that might be made to the current system and decide if they wish to make such changes or not.

The scope of the review would be to look at the ways other planning authorities work and examine various models for the number, size, responsibilities and structure of committees along with any other associated issues.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2016/19 has a Council priority of 'Efficiency - Great value services'. This priority should be enabled and supported by clear, well understood and efficient governance arrangements.

3 Details

- 3.1 The review will look at both Committees, North and South. It will look at the Committee's understanding of what it is there for, together with the format of the Committees and its processes to include the role of Committee Members and their relationships with officers. It will also look at what improvements / recommendations could be made and any training requirements necessary.
- 3.2 I suggest that a visit with Members to at least two other local authorities that use a differing Committee process should be undertaken in order to review and compare other practices and procedures.
- 3.3 I have also contacted the Planning Advisory Service and enquired as to what one of their reviews would entail. Full details of their proposal can be found at Appendix 1 together with the cost implication.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 If approval is given the review will be undertaken and a report will be submitted to the Governance Committee.

5 Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 N/A

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 N/A

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There may be a costs implication if the Committee decides to instruct the Planning Advisory Service to undertake an independent peer review as shown in Appendix 1.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 Under Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), it is a legal requirement for the Council to have a Constitution. It is the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer to monitor and review the operation of the Council's Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of it are given full effect and to make recommendations for ways in which the Constitution could be amended in order to enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 The recommendations within this report are part of mitigating corporate risk by ensuring that the Planning Committees work effectively and exercise good practice.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 The Constitution and its Procedures, Rules and Codes act as an enabling tool in helping the Council meet its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.
- 10.2 Consideration of how projects and proposals can secure environmental, social and economic benefits and reduce negative consequences should be an integral part of decision-making and the Constitution will facilitate such considerations.