

DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 30 January 2019
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Fissenden, Mrs Gooch (Vice-Chairman), Joy, Lewins, Perry, Mrs Ring and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Notification of Substitute Members	
3. Urgent Items	
4. Notification of Visiting Members	
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers	
6. Disclosures of Lobbying	
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 14 November 2018	1 - 5
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
10. Questions and answer session for members of the public	
11. Committee Work Programme	6
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PUBLIC SPEAKING AND ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

Issued on Tuesday 22 January 2019

Continued Over/:



Alison Broom, Chief Executive

In order to speak at this meeting, please contact Democratic Services using the contact details above, by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. Monday 28th January). If asking a question, you will need to provide the full text in writing. If making a statement, you will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on. Please note that slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to the Policy and Resources Committee, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by three Councillors, to the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance by: 28th November 2018.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democracy Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Fissenden,
Mrs Gooch, Joy, Lewins, Perry, Mrs Ring and
Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

41. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

42. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

43. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

44. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

45. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

46. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

48. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

49. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

50. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Mr Sam Bailey, Democratic and Administration Services Manager, updated the Committee on the Committee Structure Review item scheduled for 9 January 2019. Mr Bailey stated that interviews were underway as part of the evidence gathering phase of the project, and that the analysis of data from the survey and interviews would be used to inform the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

51. REFERENCE FROM HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - RECORDING OF CHANGES TO PLANS/POLICIES IN MINUTES

Mr Bailey explained that, at its meeting on 30 October 2018, the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee noticed some agreed amendments to a document had not been minuted. Mr Bailey stated that this was an isolated instance and reassured the Committee that appropriate action had been taken to ensure best practice was consistently understood across the Democratic Services team.

RESOLVED: That the Democracy Committee consider that any changes to Council policies and plans moved and agreed by Committees be fully detailed in the minutes in future for clear transparency.

Voting: Unanimous

52. INCLUSION OF REGULATORY COMMITTEES IN BUDGETARY UNDERSPEND CONSULTATIONS

Mr Bailey outlined that the report addressed concerns raised by Members of the Planning Committee regarding the consultation process for budgetary underspends. Mr Bailey advised that the rights of Members, such as speaking as a Visiting Member and lobbying Members of other Committees, meant that there were sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure that all suggestions from Members could be heard when considering budgetary underspends.

The Committee commented that:

- The participation of Visiting Members at Committees was an effective way of ensuring that opinions were considered.
- Members submitting an agenda item request would be an alternative approach to raise issues or suggestions.

- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (SPST) had a responsibility towards the Planning Committee, as the SPST Committee had an overview of the Planning Committee budget.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee are invited to Planning Group Spokespersons meetings, when appropriate.

Voting: For – 5 Against – 4 Abstentions – 0

RESOLVED: That the current procedure rules remain unchanged.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

53. REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL - OUTSIDE BODIES

Mr Bailey reminded the Committee that during its meeting on 26 September 2018, Council agreed amendments to the scheme of Outside Bodies. During consideration of this, an inconsistency was identified regarding the distribution of Outside Bodies relating to green spaces. Mr Bailey stated that as the Heritage, Culture and Leisure (HCL) Committee was responsible for parks and open spaces, moving the following Outside Bodies to the HCL Committee would ensure consistency:

- Vinters Valley Park Trust
- Allington Millennium Green Trust
- Hayle Park Nature Reserve

The Committee observed that:

- Consistency was important, and this could be achieved by allocating Outside Body Council Representatives through the Democracy Committee or HCL Committee.
- Both Council Representatives and Outside Bodies were responsible for ensuring that there was appropriate representation on these organisations and that updates were regularly reported back to the relevant Committee.
- The Outside Bodies in question performed similar functions, and therefore, it was sensible to allocate these to a single Committee.

RESOLVED: That Council is recommended to agree the amended scheme of Outside Bodies.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 1 Abstentions – 0

54. EXEMPTIONS TO POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY RULES: URGENCY AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEES

Mr Bailey summarised that the exemptions to political proportionality rules for the Urgency and Employment Committees was within the scope of the Committee Structure Review. A separate report, for debate and comment, had been produced to outline the implications of any changes to proportionality rules.

The Committee commented that:

- Political balance and representativeness were key considerations, as it was necessary for Committees to appropriately represent the public.
- There was the potential to merge current committee functions to reduce the overall number of Committees.
- A quorate urgent Policy and Resources Committee was a sensible alternative to the Urgency Committee.
- It was important to consider whether the Policy and Resources Committee was over-extending its functions, particularly if it was to undertake the role of the Urgency Committee.
- The division of functions within the Employment Committee, which prevented Members from undertaking numerous roles, was a complication that required consideration.
- There was an overlap in the functions of the Democracy Committee and Audit, Governance and Standards (AGS) Committee, as the AGS Committee had been introduced under the Cabinet system. The return to the Committee system had overlooked the potential duplication of functions.
- The creation of a General Purposes Group, which would be responsible for the internal workings of the Council, may create a meaningful and worthwhile Committee. This would justify an increased membership size and allowed numerous members to undertake the tasks currently within the remit of the Employment Committee.
- It was crucial to ensure that all Committee memberships comprised an odd number of Councillors, so that the casting Chairman's vote was not too powerful.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Bailey stated that:

- The primary impact of applying proportionality rules to the Urgency and Employment Committees was that smaller political parties would have more negotiable seats on committees.
- An urgent Policy and Resources Committee meeting could undertake the responsibilities of the Urgency Committee, as the

quorum was similar and could be easily achieved when considering the size of the Committee membership.

- A change to the Constitution would be required to accommodate a situation where a single party held overall control of the Council, if the current proportionality rules were retained.
- As the Employment Committee appraised the Chief Executive and Directors, the membership would ideally comprise of Members who worked closely with these Officers.

Mrs Patricia Narebor, Head of Legal Partnership, informed the Committee that there were prescribed legislative requirements regarding statutory Officers, which could not be altered, although which committee was responsible for them was a matter of local choice.

RESOLVED: That the feedback provided by the Committee be noted.

55. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.50 p.m.

2018/19 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Lead	Report Author
Learning and Development	Democracy	Mar-19	Angela Woodhouse	Sam Bailey
Committee Structure Review	Democracy	Mar-19	Angela Woodhouse	Sam Bailey
Review of Constitution (if required)	Democracy	Mar-19	Patricia Narebor	Christine Nuttall

DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE

30/12/2019

External Board/Outside Body

External Board/Outside Body	Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee
Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body/External Board	Martin Round
Author	Martin Round
Date of External Board/Outside Body Meeting Attended	Quarterly meetings

Purpose of the External Board/Outside Body:
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<p>To oversee and monitor the management of the Aerodrome and its regulatory licences/controls in respect of the local communities - the flights, events and various activities - that includes air space in neighbouring authorities as well as MBC: T.Wells/Frittenden, Ashford/Smarden.</p>
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Update:

<p>The Aerodrome continues to enjoy success in respect of increasing visitors, both as participants, visiting the Museum, attending events and purely to watch the many activities. Notable events include the Battle of Britain event, the South East Model Air show and Combined Ops, where land and air re-enactments take place, displays and other shows happen and musical events take place. Car shows are also a regular event.</p>

<p>There are many businesses located at the Aerodrome from parachuting, microlites, hot air balloons, flight lessons, helicopters, aerial photography (used by MBC and Google), leisure flights to France and Belgium and further afield, and maintenance and refits of planes.</p>

<p>One such business flies paid-for guests in classic planes such as Spitfires and Tiger Moths. Planning permission has now approved the flights of Dakotas, or B57s.</p>

<p>Such events and activities requires a number of laws and regulations to be followed together with certain elements of good practice guidance, such as noise, times of flights, that this Committee monitors. This Committee follows obligations to oversee and monitor Aerodrome management of both MBC as the Planning Authority and for the Civil Aviation Authority together with some responsibility to the Ministry of Defence, for who in any national emergency would still be able to lay claim on the facility.</p>

<p>Whilst the Aerodrome attracts 1000s of visitors, it should be noted that key issues concerning security and safety are very important.</p>

National Security: Headcorns position makes it one of the first ports of call in air space from the continent. National Security alerts have meant that "Border Force" now provide the Aerodrome with Officers almost full time, as there have been a number of concerns and incidents in the last year.

For the above reasons it is essential that MBC maintains an interest in the work of the Aerodrome and indeed is aware of Planning and Security implications (and economic development/Tourism opportunities).

A local Ward member is obviously needed to grasp any local effects.

DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2019

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE REVIEW

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sam Bailey, Democratic and Administration Services Manager Mike Nash, Democratic Services Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report outlines the research undertaken during the Committee Structure Review. The report recommends changes to the committee structure and improvements to the operation of the committee system to enhance decision making, while ensuring that the objectives and principles of the committee system are met.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the Committee Structure Review report (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) is agreed.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy Committee	30 January 2019
Democracy Committee	13 March 2019
Full Council	10 April 2019

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) adopted the committee system of governance in May 2015. Having resolved to change from a cabinet to a committee system, the Council cannot change to an alternative structure of governance for 5 years except by approval at a referendum. While the earliest a new model of governance could realistically be introduced following a resolution of Council is May 2020, the Council may adjust the current committee system at any point.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 14 March 2018, the Democracy Committee resolved to undertake a review of the current committees and ways of working, excluding the regulatory committees. A report was then brought to the Committee on 2 July 2018, which set out the proposed scope and timetable for the review.
- 1.3 A working group was formed, consisting of members and substitute members of the Democracy Committee. This group assisted in the design of a survey and interview process, which supplemented desktop research. This research was designed to assess whether the original objectives and principles of the committee system had been met.

Objective

1. To achieve greater involvement and participation of all Members in decision making whilst avoiding a cumbersome bureaucratic structure that lacks direction and accountability.

Principles

1. To be cost neutral
2. To increase Member participation in decision making
3. To lead to more effective and efficient decision making

- 1.4 The research highlighted a number of key themes:
 - The speed and efficiency of decision making was perceived to be the key weakness of the committee model
 - Member participation had increased since moving to the committee system
 - Cost neutrality had been achieved
 - The effectiveness of decision making could be improved through alterations to the governance model, enhancements to aspects of the work in the committee report cycle and promoting consistency of practice within committee meetings
- 1.5 The Working Group met on three occasions to plan the review, discuss the findings and plan the final report to committee.

- 1.6 Following the completion of the evidence gathering exercise, the working group reconvened to interrogate the evidence base, assess potential modifications to the committee structure and finalise the recommendations.
 - 1.7 The Committee is asked to review the draft report attached at Appendix 1. Once the report has been agreed and finalised it will need to be agreed by Council.
 - 1.8 Once a structure has been agreed through approval of the report, detailed terms of reference for the new Committee structure will be required. A final working group meeting is planned to happen prior to Committee in March, so that Members have an opportunity to consider feedback from the Democracy Committee and define the role of each Committee further. This will be followed by detailed drafting of the proposed terms of reference of the Committees by officers. The Democracy Committee meeting in March will then be invited to agree recommendations for any amendments to the Constitution required to be presented to Full Council in April. The new structure will then be live in time for the new municipal year.
 - 1.9 Whilst the report attached at Appendix 1 gives recommendations regarding the principles around how to structure the Council's Committees in the new municipal year, the exact names of the Committees and their Terms of Reference will be considered at the next Democracy Committee meeting in March. There will be an opportunity for members to provide guidance on their preferred approach at the Working Group meeting planned in February.
 - 1.10 The findings of the evidence gathering exercise, a suggested committee structure model and recommendations for improving decision making are outlined in Appendix 1.
 - 1.11 At its meeting in April, Council will be asked to agree the Committee Structure Review report, along with the detailed changes to the Constitution required to implement the recommendations.
-

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Recommendations

- 2.1 The Working Group report outlines 19 recommendations in total. These recommendations have been drafted as a result of the findings of the Working Group made up of members and substitute members of the Democracy Committee, and will need to be agreed by Council. Recommendations 1-18 are wide ranging in their scope, and recommendation 19 specifically recommends changes to the Committee structure. The recommended options regarding recommendations 1-18 are outlined below, with the options regarding recommendation 19 set out in paragraph 2.6 onwards.
- 2.2 The Committee could approve the report and recommendations as proposed.

- 2.3 The Committee could amend the existing report and recommendations.
- 2.4 The Committee could redraft sections of the report and amend the recommendations.
- 2.5 The Committee could choose not to approve the report (do nothing).

Committee Structure – Option 1

- 2.6 Within Recommendation 19 there are a number of options for amending the Committee Structure. The Working Group's preferred option for service committees is 'Option 2' (adjustment of current Service Committees), while the preferred option for other committees is 'Option 6' (Policy and Resources Sub-Committees). This is combined to create 'Figure 6 – Final Suggested Governance Model' on page 60 of Appendix 1. This option provides the advantages of aligning Committees to Strategic Plan Priorities, but without increasing the overall number of Committees. It also combines Employment and Democracy Committees, which further reduces the number of Committees at the Council, improving the efficiency of the system. Finally moving the Employment and Performance Sub-Committees over to the Policy and Resources Committee gives a wider pool of members to sit on these Committees due to Policy and Resources Committee being constituted of 15 members, in comparison with 12 members of the Employment Committee. It is also likely that the most prominent members, with the most contact with the Chief Officers, will sit on these Sub-Committees which are responsible for the appointment of Chief Officers and their annual appraisals.
- 2.7 An important point to note for this proposed committee structure is that although the outcome statement within the Strategic Plan 'The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed' is assigned to the Growth and Infrastructure Committee, as this Committee is responsible for the priority of 'Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure', there needs to be a separation of roles of the Council in this matter for circumstances where the Council has an investment or property interest. It is entirely appropriate for the Growth and Infrastructure Committee to take the lead on this action area when considering master planning from the perspective of the Council as Local Planning Authority i.e. when formulating spatial planning policy. However there are a number of regeneration and potential new development and settlement projects in specific areas of the borough where the Council may have a land or investment interest. These types of regeneration and development projects also require master planning from a commercial perspective and it is recommended that strategic decisions relating to master planning in this context should be the responsibility of Policy and Resources Committee. An example of a current project that falls into this category is the Maidstone East regeneration scheme where decision making has been undertaken by the Policy and Resources Committee. Secondly, these projects are often cross cutting requiring consideration of multiple priorities and outcomes outlined in the Strategic Plan, making it appropriate that they are considered by Policy and Resources Committee. This is in line with the provisions within the Constitution regarding the procedure for considering items that have cross cutting issues. This issue will be addressed fully

through carefully drafting the terms of reference of the Committees once the report has been approved.

- 2.8 This option is the recommended option, as outlined in the report attached as Appendix 1.

Committee Structure – Option 2

- 2.9 This option creates an additional Service Committee so that the Service Committees are aligned to Strategic Plan priorities. The main reason why this is not recommended is that it would be a more costly option, as the number of Service Committees would be expanded. This option is referred to as 'Option 3' in report attached as Appendix 1.

Committee Structure – Option 3

- 2.10 This option broadly retains the current committee structure and Terms of Reference, but creates a standalone Economic Development Committee. The reasons that this option is not recommended is that it would be a more costly option due to the increase in the number of Service Committees, and would result in a position where Committees have unbalanced workload. This option is referred to as 'Option 4' in report attached as Appendix 1.

Committee Structure – Option 4

- 2.11 An alternative considered in relation to the Appointment and Performance Sub Committee was retaining the Appointment and Performance Sub-Committees as Sub-Committees of the new 'Democracy and Employment Committee'. This was not recommended as the Democracy and Employment Committee only has a membership of 9. With the removal of the mandatory requirement for Political Group Leaders to sit on this Committee there is a risk that members represented on this Committee would not have as much direct contact with the Council's Chief Officers. This would be disadvantageous when making decisions regarding the appointment of, and assessment of performance for, relevant Officers.

Committee Structure – Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 2.12 There are a number of other options that were explored briefly in the report attached as Appendix 1 on page 31. The negative aspects outweighed the positive aspects on each of the suggested options so these options are not recommended. The options explored are:

- Aligning Committees to the roles of Heads of Service
- Aligning Committees to Key Services
- Aligning Committees to Common Skillsets
- Merging Economic Development and Housing Functions
- Merging Economic Development and Strategic Spatial Planning

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The preferred option is outlined in paragraph 2.2 of this report and reflects a large amount of work by members and officers. The reasons for the preferred option in terms of its own merits and comparison with other options are set out above. Members' attention is drawn to the fact that if new arrangements are to be ready for implementation in the municipal year 2019/20 any amendments to the recommendations of the Working Group would need to be minor in scope.

3.2 The timetable of next steps is set out in section 6 below.

4. RISK

4.1 The risks in implementing recommendations 1-18 of the report will be considered by the appropriate decision maker when a response is formulated to the recommendations once the report has been agreed.

4.2 In terms of the recommendation 19, regarding amendments to the committee structure – the risks of all of the different approaches (including the do nothing option) have been considered and are within the Council's risk appetite.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 Consultation with Members and Officers has taken place through a survey and interview process. For full details please see the report attached at Appendix 1.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 If the report is approved, this will be used to define the details of the recommended committee structure. The working group will meet in February to consider the impact of the recommendations in further detail and assist with drawing up the names and detailed terms of reference of each of the Committees.

6.2 Proposed changes to the Constitution, Committee Terms of Reference and responses to the package of recommendations will be considered by Democracy Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2019.

6.3 The Democracy Committee will be asked to recommend the changes to the Constitution and Terms of Reference for adoption to Full Council on 10 April 2019.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will improve the Council's ability to achieve priorities and objectives described in the new Strategic Plan, as the governance structure will be tailored to align to these.	Democratic Services Officer
Risk Management	See Section 3.1.	Democratic Services Officer
Financial	The recommended option can be delivered within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer
Staffing	The recommendations will be delivered with current staffing.	Democratic Services Officer
Legal	The Committee system of Governance is one of the permitted forms of governance, under Part 1A, section 9B of the Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000). Having resolved to adopt the committee system, the Council cannot change to a Cabinet form of governance within 5 years (Section 9KC(4) of the LGA 2000). However, it is appropriate during that time to make amendments to the way the committee system operates to ensure improvements in its operation and in the decision making process.	Principal Solicitor, Contentious and Corporate Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will not increase the volume of data held by the Council.	Democratic Services Officer
Equalities	No impact identified as a result of this report and recommendations.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	N/A	Democratic Services Officer

Crime and Disorder	N/A	Democratic Services Officer
Procurement	N/A	Democratic Services Officer

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Committee Structure Review Report
- Appendix 2: Financial Information
- Appendix 3: Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis
- Appendix 4: Interview Summary
- Appendix 5: Agenda Items for Noting by Committee

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Background Document 1: Full Council Report – Movement to a Committee System
<https://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=151&MIId=2144&Ver=4>
- Background Document 2: Democracy Committee Report – Decommissioning of the Democracy Committee
<https://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=582&MIId=2876&Ver=4>
- Background Document 3: Democracy Committee Report – Economic Development Committee
<https://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=582&MIId=2876&Ver=4>
- Background Document 4: Democracy Committee Report – Committee Structure Review Scoping Report
<https://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=582&MIId=3067&Ver=4>

Committee Structure Review

Foreword

[Wording and Picture]

Councillor Fran Wilson, Chairman of the Democracy Committee

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Introduction

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) adopted the committee system of governance in May 2015 under provisions in the Localism Act 2011. Having resolved to change from a cabinet to a committee system, the Council cannot change to an alternative structure of governance for 5 years except by approval at a referendum. The earliest a new model of governance could realistically be introduced is May 2020, however, the Council may adjust the current committee system prior to this.

In March 2018, the Democracy Committee decided to undertake a review to consider the effectiveness of the committee structure and whether it fulfils the original objectives and principles agreed when the system was changed. Initial lines of enquiry included the decommissioning of the Democracy Committee and the creation of an Economic Development Committee. At its meeting on 14 March 2018, the Democracy Committee commented that a wider review of committees should take place, considering committee size, responsibilities and the overall number of committees. Consequently, the Democracy Committee resolved:

“That a review be carried out into the functions and terms of reference of all the Committees, excluding the Regulatory Committees.”

– Democracy Committee, 14 March 2018

Scope

To assess whether the committee structure had achieved the original objectives and principles set.

Objective	To achieve greater involvement and participation of all Members in decision making whilst avoiding a cumbersome bureaucratic structure that lacks direction and accountability.
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be cost neutral • To increase Member participation in decision making • To lead to more effective and efficient decision making

Research to be undertaken:

- Review of the Terms of Reference of all non-regulatory committees to identify if they are effective, any confusion and whether they could be improved.
- Consultation with other Councils who have also changed governance arrangements.
- Desktop analysis of the financial cost of the structure using the information from the original review for comparison.
- Review of the number of meetings and decisions taken by committees applying the objective and principles.
- Detailed look at a sample of decisions from committees.
- Interviews with Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees, and Group Leaders, since the structure inception.
- Consultation with Officers and Members on whether the current structure meets the objectives and principles set.

The timetable for the review:

July to December 2018	Evidence gathering and research
January 2019	Report to Democracy Committee
March 2019	Draft Terms of Reference and Draft Constitutional Changes
April 2019	Recommendations to Full Council
May 2019	Implementation of changes

Methodology

Evidence was gathered using a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches:

1. Desktop Research
 - A comparison of MBC and other Local Authorities operating a committee system.
 - An evaluation of constitutional and procedural trends at MBC.
 - An assessment of financial and budgetary aspects of the committee system at MBC
 - Further investigative work, regarding decision making trends at MBC, arising from interview feedback.
2. Online Survey
 - An online survey was circulated to Members and Officers at MBC
3. Confidential Member and Officer Interviews
 - 6 individual interviews
 - 6 group interviews

Unless stated otherwise, all quotes included in this report are drawn from the confidential interviews.

A Working Group, consisting of Members and Substitute Members of the Democracy Committee, met on three occasions between September 2018 and December 2018. The Working Group has led the Committee Structure Review including conducting a range of interviews, considering evidence and making recommendations.

Direct consultation with other Local Authorities was not undertaken, as the working group decided that site visits were not necessary. A review of the number of meetings and decisions taken by committees applying the objective and principles has been incorporated in the qualitative analysis, due to the subjective nature of the criteria.

Summary of Suggested Recommendations

	Recommendation	Rationale	Page Number
	Participation		
1	That committee memberships are an odd number. All service committee memberships therefore remain at 9 Members, with the exception of the Policy and Resources Committee which remains at 15 Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An odd number of Members avoids potential disproportionate use of the Chairman’s casting vote. Disparate views between Members and Officers showed the strengths and weaknesses of increasing or decreasing membership size. Retaining the current membership sizes promotes participation without prolonging committee debates. Policy and Resources Committee requires a larger membership as this improves the probability of all political groups represented on the Council being represented on the committee. This is appropriate considering the oversight function of the committee. 	16
2	That all committees are politically proportionate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This view was shared widely during interview feedback, and would ensure that all committees were subject to the same proportionality rules. Furthermore, the views expressed by the Democracy Committee on this topic have been taken into account. 	17
3	That a consistent process for tracking and naming agenda items via Member requests is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of a tracking system will provide transparency for both Members and Officers. This would also ensure that the number of requests made, and the outcome of these requests, can be easily determined. A naming convention for agenda item requests would ensure these are easily recognisable on committee agendas. 	18

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4	<p>That the ability to undertake reviews is promoted in order to examine key topics and promote Member engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following positive feedback regarding Member engagement in the Committee Structure Review, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Democracy Committee requested that the ability to undertake reviews is promoted to ensure that future topics can be considered in a similar manner. This would help to address the feeling of disengagement that has been shared by Members, while also allowing for detailed analysis of key issues. • While this approach is available to use currently, there is a resourcing implication, as it would be reliant on Democratic Services to facilitate the process. The resource implication and desired outcome would therefore need to be fully scoped at the beginning of the exercise. 	18
Effective and Efficient Decision Making			
5	<p>That service committee Terms of Reference include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategic Plan objectives that are the focus of the committee. Specific examples of other appropriate key issues that are within the remit of the committee. Explanation that all service committees are required to make decisions that fall within their given budget, however, these can be subject to a decision review if appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each service committee is clearly aligned to the objective/s in the new Strategic Plan. Including this in the Terms of Reference would provide direction for Officers regarding the appropriate forum for topics to be debated and resolved. This will reduce instances of reports being considered at multiple committees, a negative aspect of the current system that was identified by Members and Officers. 	22
6	<p>That the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Democratic Services Officer and Legal Officer at committee meetings be included in the Maidstone Borough Council Constitution, and that the Democratic Services Officer sits between the Chairman and Legal Officer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was stated that there was a lack of clarity regarding ‘who does what’ at committee, which can lead to Chairmen being given incompatible advice. By ensuring that each Officer was responsible for providing advice on specific topics, this would help to provide consistency to Chairmen and therefore promote effective decision making at committee. • Adjusting seating arrangements would ensure that Democratic Services Officers and Legal Representatives do not provide simultaneous advice to the Chairman. Furthermore, where there is uncertainty, discussions between the Officers can take place prior to advice being given to Chairmen. 	26

7	<p>That a clear, consistent and disciplined approach is used for Agenda Setting and Chairman’s Briefing meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The duration of these meetings should be minimised. • The focus of Agenda Setting is to ensure that the Work Programme reflects all of the topics that are to be considered by the Committee, and that each monthly meeting has an appropriately sized agenda. • The Chairman’s Briefing is used to ensure that any issues with reports are raised with Officers in advance of the meeting, that Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have the opportunity to clarify issues raised in the reports and that any potential legislative or procedural issues are identified and planned for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was accepted that Agenda Setting and Chairman’s Briefings were helpful for Members and Officers, however, common feedback indicated that it was a time consuming process for Officers, particularly for those involved in more than one committee. • Agenda Setting and Chairman’s Briefing meetings are not currently conducted consistently across all committees. Providing a clear purpose, and guidance regarding duration, ensures that these will be conducted more efficiently. 	27
8	<p>That guidance be included in the Maidstone Borough Council Constitution to ensure that only appropriate reports for noting are submitted to service committees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volume of items for noting was a consistent source of feedback, with concerns that this was often not necessary. There is best practice guidance available that can be incorporated into the Constitution, which states that the number of noting items should be minimised. 	28
9	<p>That Maidstone Borough Council continues to move towards a ‘paperlite’ office approach for agendas and committee papers, although Members may retain their right to have paper copies of agendas. Where required, Members should have ready access to appropriate technical support to enhance their ability to use electronic documents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A paperless approach to distributing committee agendas would ensure that all Members are able to access agendas and urgent updates on the day these are published. • Paperless approaches lead to significant cost savings, due to reduced printing & postage requirements. • The functionality of electronic agendas does not differ from that of a paper agenda, as it is possible to annotate reports, tab pages etc. in a similar manner. Furthermore, electronic agendas allow users to search for key information quickly during committee meetings. 	29

10	<p>That report styles are altered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly demonstrate the purpose of the report on the front cover, as part of the Executive Summary. Include the Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications section at the front of reports Align the Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications section to the new Strategic Plan objectives Ensure that sections of legislation relevant to a decision are clearly demonstrated. Ensure that, where appropriate, the length of covering reports are minimised through increased use of visuals and/or appendices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback showed that the purpose of the report should be clearly stated on the front page of reports to assist with the reading of reports and preparation for committee. Feedback indicated that the Cross Cutting Issues and Implications section needed to reflect the new Strategic Plan objectives, and that this should be moved to the front of the report to provide contextual information for Members when they read the full report. Legislative requirements needed to be understood by Members when making decisions, however, it also needed to be clear that this information was not debatable as it was unchangeable. This could also be mentioned during Officer presentations. Feedback showed that the lengths of covering reports could be significantly reduced. By diversifying the way that information is presented, it would make it more accessible and digestible to the target audience. 	31
11	<p>That a consistent approach to completing the Cross Cutting Issues and Implications section of reports is promoted: Building on the guidance contained in the committee report templates, the information and sign off columns should be fully completed by the report author, either with relevant information or “N/A” where appropriate. This information, along with the sign off column should then be updated or edited by appropriate Officers when the report is circulated for review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, this section is completed inconsistently, as Officers are not clear on who has responsibility for this. This results in reports being submitted for publication that do not clearly demonstrate that they have been reviewed by all appropriate Officers. 	31
12	<p>That any medium for sharing information with the committee, which adds value to the written report, should be considered by Officers e.g. the use of video or presentations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback suggested that this was an area that could be significantly improved, and that the diversification of how information was presented would improve information sharing. 	32

13	That Members are encouraged to approach Officers, via the Democratic Services Team, in advance of committee meetings to resolve queries regarding report contents, to fully form the wording of possible motions, or to seek advice on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and Other Significant Interests (OSIs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from both Members and Officers showed that there are instances where issues with reports, motions, DPIs and OSIs were first raised at committee. The early resolution of issues would ensure for improved efficiency of decision making. 	33
14	That a record of officer decisions made under delegated authority be introduced and frequently shared with Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback stated that delegated authority was not as transparent as it could be, and that a record of Officer decisions would support a common understanding of this. This has previously been identified by the Democratic Services Team, and work is underway on this issue. This will be completed in 2019. This record will be published on the Council website. 	35
15	That the scope of delegated authority, and the process for using this, is shared and reinforced with Members and Officers, to ensure for consistency of understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from Members and Officers suggested that although delegation could be improved, the issues centred on a misunderstanding of the current arrangements, rather than a deficiency in the arrangements. Officers should be encouraged to engage with appropriate Members if they require clarification regarding the contentiousness of an item, and whether it would be appropriate to take it to committee. 	35
16	That Full Council is presented with a “tracked changes” document outlining adjustments to the Constitution and the scheme of delegation when it is requested to approve changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This approach improves transparency and provides a clear audit trail of the changes made. 	35
17	That a comparison of delegated authority across other Local Authorities using the committee system is undertaken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would ensure that delegated authority is consistent with practice elsewhere and reflects best practice. 	35

18	That, where appropriate, alternative approaches such as briefings, are used to provide updates in order to minimise the number of reports that are submitted to committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quantity of items on committee agendas could be reduced if information was shared outside of committee meetings. This would have a positive impact on the efficiency of the committee meeting, and allow appropriate topics to be explored fully at committee. 	35
Committee Structure			
19	That a new structure for committees is introduced based on a combination of the service committees and other committees outlined in Options 2 and 6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This provides a clear remit for each service committee. Distinct alignment to Strategic Plan objectives ensures for minimal overlap in Terms of Reference, which was commonly referred to during interviews. Through removal of the Urgency Committee, and combining the Democracy Committee and Employment Committee to create the Democracy and Employment Committee, decision making is streamlined. This also ensures for greater cost efficiency by minimising the number of committee meetings required each municipal year. By assigning the Appointment and Performance Sub-Committees to the Policy and Resources Committee, this promotes the opportunity for Group Leaders to be involved in the appointment and appraisal process for Corporate Leadership Team, as Group Leaders are typically represented on the Policy and Resources Committee. 	60

A Comparison of Local Authorities

Desktop research showed that, when considering the allocation of committee functions, MBC had commonalities and disparities with other Local Authorities. Of the 44 Local Authorities operating a committee system, a sample of four were analysed alongside Maidstone Borough Council. These authorities were:

- Basildon Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council
- Tandridge District Council

Compared to the sample, MBC operated a relatively streamlined number of service committees.

Local Authority	Number of Service Committees
Basildon Borough Council	8
Tandridge District Council	5
Maidstone Borough Council	4
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	4
Canterbury City Council	3

A key commonality across the Local Authorities was the inclusion of a Policy and Resources Committee. Although the name for this committee varied across Local Authorities, the Terms of Reference were comparable, with each Local Authority having in place a ‘parent committee’ with responsibility for taking decisions which spanned other service committees. Most interviewees stated that the Policy and Resources Committee needed to maintain this overarching functionality in order for the system to function effectively.

“There is a view of Policy and Resources as having an overarching role, which it should have, because it needs to look at policy and resources across the Council. If we are to maintain a degree of strategic direction then this shouldn’t be watered down.”

Two authorities, Basildon Borough Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council, operated an Economic Development Committee. This was in contrast to MBC, where this function was within the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee. Both Basildon Borough Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council grouped other issues alongside Economic Development, which may be worth exploring when considering the terms of reference for the committees going forwards.

Local Authority	Committee	Function
Basildon Borough Council	Economic Development and Growth Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development and Skills • Education
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	Economic Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Cultural Strategy • Concessionary Pricing Strategy • Museums and Heritage Strategy • Economic Growth Strategy

A further disparity was the use of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Tandridge District Council. This Committee was responsible for two types of scrutiny; the review of decisions and “calling upon representatives of outside organisations to present information about services which have a significant impact upon local residents”. The Committee also incorporated an audit function, and met as the Crime and Disorder Committee as required. These functions were undertaken within various committees at MBC, such as the Policy and Resources Committee (Decision Review), Audit, Governance and Standards Committee (Audit) and Communities, Housing and Environment Committee (Crime and Disorder Committee).

The final key difference was apparent when comparing MBC to Canterbury City Council. Canterbury City Council included an Urgency Sub-Committee for each of the service committees. This function was encompassed by a single Urgency Committee at MBC, whereas Basildon Borough Council utilised an Urgent Decision and Staffing Sub-Committee. Tandridge District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council both had provision in the constitution for the Chief Executive and other Chief Officers to make urgent decisions in consultation with Group Leaders or the Leader of the Council.

Findings – Cost Neutrality

Financial Research

An analysis of the costs associated with the provision of the Member Support and Democratic Services functions. The cost of providing the service is made up from budgets that include member allowances, member training, webcasting, printing and postage as well as staff salaries for Democratic Services Officers (and the team manager). There has been some fluctuation in relation to spend on staff salaries, but these have been offset by underspends and savings made in the member support budget. Overall, the combined spend on these functions has been lower every year under the Committee System than the final year of the Cabinet System.

Spend on Member Support and Democratic Services Salaries	
Year	Spend
2014/15	531,380
2015/16	490,039
2016/17	466,738
2017/18	498,338

Whilst this is not the only definition of ‘cost neutrality’, this was a definition that was easy to test through data the Council already held. A further breakdown of financial information can be found in Appendix 2 to this report.

Findings – Participation

Committee Membership Size

Survey results revealed that the majority of respondents considered the current committee membership sizes to be correct. During interviews, Members tended to state a preference for larger committees, as it was believed this would improve participation in decision making. It was recognised, however, that it could be challenging for political groups to fill the current committee memberships. An increased committee size, therefore, may not necessarily lead to participation from a wider pool of Members. Officers also suggested that an increased committee membership did not guarantee better decision making. Instead, it was felt that this sometimes resulted in unnecessarily prolonged debates.

“We have a situation where there are not enough spaces for all Councillors who wish to be involved.”

“The more Members that are on a committee, the longer decisions take, and the quality of debate is not improved.”

In terms of the Policy and Resources Committee, there was a balance between those who wished for the committee to remain at its current size and those who did not feel that the committee warranted a larger membership. It was stated during interviews, however, that the larger membership improved the probability of all political groups represented on the Council being represented on the Policy and Resources Committee. This was considered to be appropriate when considering the oversight function of the Committee.

Finally, most interviewees stated that it was desirable for committee memberships to be an odd number, to avoid potential disproportionate use of the Chairman’s casting vote. This would also ensure that a Chairman can be appointed at the beginning of the municipal year, as this removes the potential situation of a deadlock due to two candidates having an equal number of votes.

“You need an odd number of members, as otherwise the system doesn’t work.”

1. **RECOMMENDED:** That committee memberships are an odd number. All service committee memberships therefore remain at 9 Members, with the exception of the Policy and Resources Committee which remains at 15 Members.

Political Proportionality of Committee Membership

The issue of political proportionality was raised during interviews. It was broadly agreed across those who discussed the matter that all committees should be proportionate. This matter was also considered by the Democracy Committee on 14 November 2018. The issue affected the current arrangements for Urgency Committee and Employment Committee, as all other committees were configured in line with political proportionality. At its meeting on 14 November 2018, the Democracy Committee commented that:

“balance and representativeness were key considerations, as it was necessary for Committees to appropriately represent the public.”

– Democracy Committee, 14 November 2018

Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and the Local Government Committee and Political Group Regulations 1990, state that the Council must allocate seats on committees and other prescribed bodies so as to give effect to the political balance rules. The Council can only depart from these rules if it is agreed at Full Council, provided no member votes against the proposal. It was explained at interview that if a single Councillor opposed the recommended allocation, then an alternative allocation would need to be agreed that was politically proportionate across all Committees. In reality, this would need to be prepared before the meeting, with a separate negotiation occurring to this allocation at the same time as the allocation that didn't apply the proportionality rules. This introduces unnecessary complexity to the negotiations that are required when preparing a proposed allocation of seats, and incentivises those parties that are advantaged by the politically balanced allocation to vote against the allocation that is not politically balanced.

- 2. RECOMMENDED:** That all committees are politically proportionate.

Member Agenda Item Requests

The survey demonstrated that 56% of Member respondents had requested an agenda item. According to the survey, the majority of requests (71%) were then discussed at committee, while 14% were resolved without needing to be put on a committee agenda. For Members who had not requested an agenda item, the most common reason was that they did not need to (82%). Desktop research showed that there were instances of Councillors requesting agenda items throughout the last four municipal years. It was not possible, however, to consistently identify these requests, as the naming convention for agenda item requests was typically identical to a standard agenda item. Equally, agenda item requests did not always feature as an agenda item, as the issues were resolved outside of committee. It was consequently difficult to identify the proportion of agenda item requests that were discussed at committee. The implementation of a tracking system and naming convention for agenda item requests would therefore ensure that these can be traced, and if necessary, followed up to ensure that all have been dealt with appropriately.

“There is no traceability and agenda item requests don’t get onto the Work Programme unless it is challenged in committee.”

- 3. RECOMMENDED:** That a consistent process for tracking and naming agenda items via Member requests is implemented.

Visiting Members

Survey results showed that all respondents understood how to speak as a Visiting Member at committee and were confident using this constitutional provision. An expansion of the role of Visiting Members was suggested during interview, in order to encourage participation in debate. One suggestion was to offer Visiting Members opportunities to speak during debate, however, the Constitution states that Visiting Members may do this already with the Chairman’s consent. It was also suggested that Visiting Members could sit alongside Committee Members in a non-voting capacity. This had practical implications, however, as it could lead to confusion during votes if a non-voting member was erroneously counted as a voter. Current practice with regards to Visiting Members is that the Members sit in the gallery until invited to speak, whereby they approach the Speakers Table. Furthermore, the Constitution states that at the Planning Committee, Visiting Members should sit away from the body of the Committee. This ensures that there is no confusion between Committee Members and Visiting Members. Due to current suitability of arrangements with regards to Visiting Members, as outlined above, no recommendations have been made to adjust the current process for Visiting Members.

Member Involvement in Scrutiny of Key Topics

Following Member participation and engagement in the Committee Structure Review, positive feedback was shared regarding the value of the approach. While the ability to undertake scrutiny-style work is available, this is not commonly used. There is a resourcing implication for undertaking such work, and therefore the outcome and scope would need to be clearly defined at the beginning of the work. Nonetheless, if there is benefit in undertaking an exercise, and the current staffing capacity can accommodate the work, then this should be considered.

- 4. RECOMMENDED:** That the ability to undertake reviews is promoted in order to examine key topics and promote Member engagement.

Findings – Effective and Efficient Decision Making

Speed of Decision Making

A commonly held view was that the committee system did not allow for quick and flexible decision making. 56% of survey respondents stated that they believed this to be the case, while Members and Officers varied in their opinions during interview. In order to assess whether this is an issue with perception or functionality, three areas were explored. Firstly, a comparison of the theoretical timeframes for a decision within a cabinet and committee system is outlined. This is followed by an assessment of the number of decision referrals that took place under the cabinet system, compared to the committee system. Finally, a case study of two commonly mentioned topics; CCTV and the Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy demonstrate the different journey of reports through the system that have been considered on multiple occasions.

“A weaker part of the committee system is the speed in which decisions are made.”

- *“There is no evidence of decision making being delayed, as there is always an opportunity to take something to a committee soon.”*

“Officers have generally got stuff in front of Councillors for decisions well.”

Comparison of Theoretical Models

An assessment of the theoretical Cabinet and Committee models demonstrated the various timeframes associated with decision making. The models assessed the fastest possible time that a decision could be made, based on the assumption that there were no Bank Holidays and that the decision was not subject to a Call-In or Decision Referral. These models revealed that the process for getting a topic to the appropriate decision making point was lengthier in a Cabinet System than a Committee System, due to the inclusion of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting prior to decision making. This is not a statutory requirement, but it was how MBC operated in a Cabinet system, in accordance with best practice. For Key Decisions, an extended timeframe was required, as the item needed to be included on the Forward Plan for 28 days prior to the decision being made. In reality, however, engagement with Members and Officers via briefings and workshops often take place prior to a decision being made in the Committee system. It is therefore likely that the timeframes for getting an item to a decision making point are comparable. Once a decision had been made, the Call-In/Decision Referral process was identical, and subsequently, so were the timeframes for implementing a decision. In both models, the functionality for making urgent decisions was available, meaning that these timeframes could be shortened, where appropriate.

Figure 1 – Cabinet – Key Decision Model

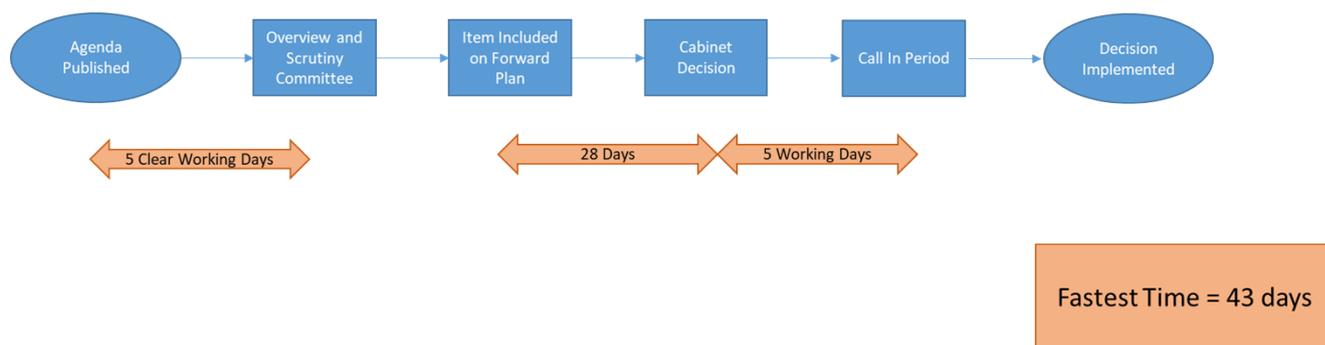


Figure 2 – Cabinet – Non-Key Decision Model

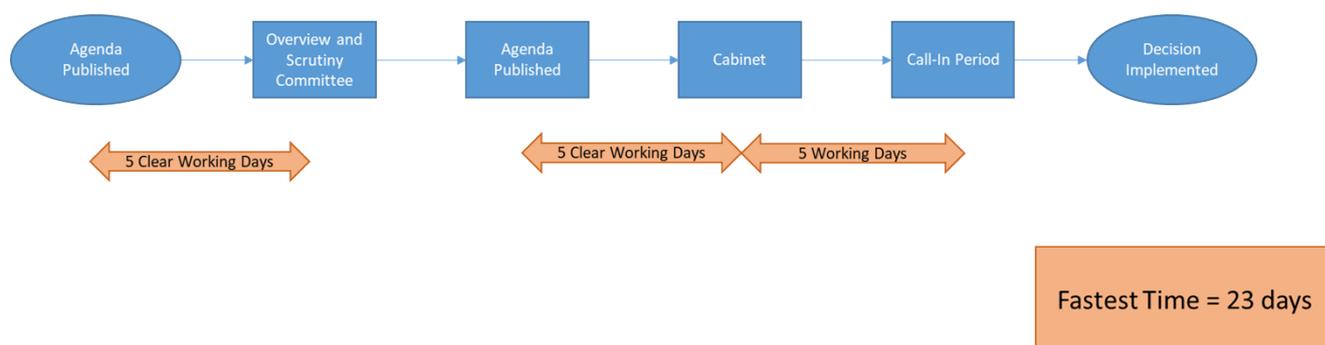
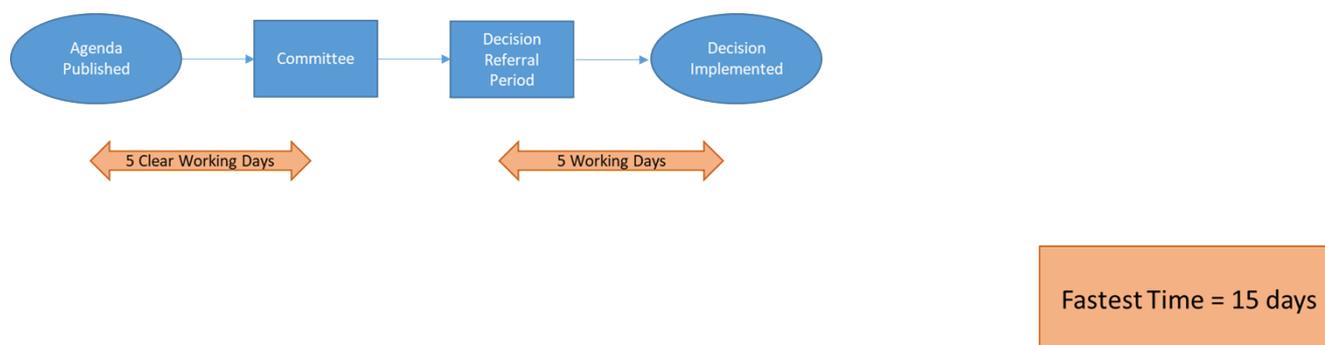


Figure 3 – Committee Decision Model



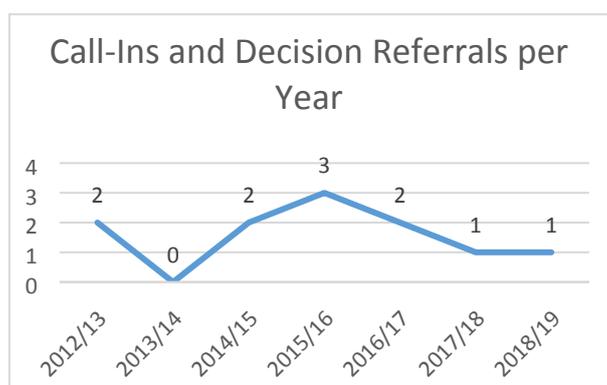
Decision Referrals

Survey results showed that 72% of Member respondents understood how to request a review of a service committee decision. This was the weakest result for questions that assessed Member’s understanding of committee procedures. The Decision Referral process was referred to as Call-In under the Cabinet system. Previously, Overview and Scrutiny committees would use Call-Ins to request that Cabinet reconsiders a decision. In the Committee system, this functionality has been included within the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee. The key change is that the Policy and Resources Committee makes a decision on a topic, even if it was not responsible for the original decision. Interview feedback highlighted that decision referrals impact upon the speed of decision making, as the same topic was considered twice. It was stated, however, that it was important to make the right decision rather than a quick decision.

“Speed and efficiency are not the same thing.”

Desktop research showed that the number of decision referrals peaked in 2015/16 when the committee system was introduced (Figure 4). Since 2015/16, the number of decision referrals has returned to a level that was comparable to the cabinet system. The outcome of decision referrals since 2015/16, where only one original decision was fully endorsed, shows that this had been used at appropriate times and in an efficient manner. Furthermore, the Members who signed Decision Referral Forms were often not Members of the original decision making committee. This demonstrates wider participation in decision making for particularly contentious topics. These trends evidence a maturing system that has become more efficient over time. The process appears to work effectively, however, there is a need to ensure that the decision referral process is included in training for Members to ensure the mechanism is widely understood and continues to be used effectively.

Figure 4 – Call-Ins and Decision Referrals per Year



Note: 2018/19 is not a full year.

Case Studies: CCTV and Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy

Despite the evidence demonstrating that the Cabinet and Committee system were comparable in terms of the speed of decision making, it was a commonly held view across the survey and interview feedback that the Committee system was considered slower, and this should not be discarded. CCTV Provision and the Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy were often referenced to demonstrate how the committee system had led to delays in decision making. An assessment of the decision making trends for service committee agenda items in 2017/18, which were not standing items or items for solely for noting, revealed that there were very few items where a decision was not made by the committee. In the case of the Review of Parish Services Scheme (CHE Committee, 14 November 2017), this was deferred to allow for further engagement to take place at a scheduled meeting. The Maidstone Community Lottery (CHE Committee, 20 June 2017), was the only example in the municipal year where the recommendations were wholly refused. It is therefore believed that the perception of the committee system as a slower decision making model arose primarily from issues experienced by the CCTV Provision and Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy items. These have been explored to ensure that lessons can be learned from these two instances.

Case Study: CCTV

CCTV Provision has been discussed on multiple occasions at the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee since 2016. This topic was discussed numerous times at the same committee as additional reports were requested. This resulted in incremental changes being made to the CCTV provision.

Alternative approaches to this could include the use of a briefing to share information that was submitted as a report, or to use the Crime and Disorder Committee as a means to scrutinise CCTV provision prior to a decision being made. These approaches would have assisted with decision making, while promoting participation from a wider audience.

Case Study: Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy

The Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy was discussed at the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee and Policy and Resources Committee in 2018, as various aspects of the work fell within the remit of the different committees.

This shows that there is the potential to streamline decision making by designating a single point of decision making, and that committee Terms of Reference could be enhanced to ensure that this did not occur in future.

Committee Terms of Reference

Building on from the findings of the Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy case study, an assessment of MBC committee Terms of Reference indicated that there was potential for improvement. This view was reinforced through the survey and interview process. The survey asked respondents whether Terms of Reference overlapped. This question was answered by 29 respondents, with 76% stating that they did overlap. In addition to this, interviewees suggested that the clarity of committee purpose needed to be enhanced. Furthermore, committees also needed to be defined as the final decision maker for relevant topics. Anomalous subjects within the remit of a committee also required explanation. An example of this was the Crematorium currently being within the remit of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee. Finally, it was stated that clarity regarding committee budgets, and when it was appropriate to request additional funding from the Policy and Resources Committee, would minimise unnecessary references between service committees.

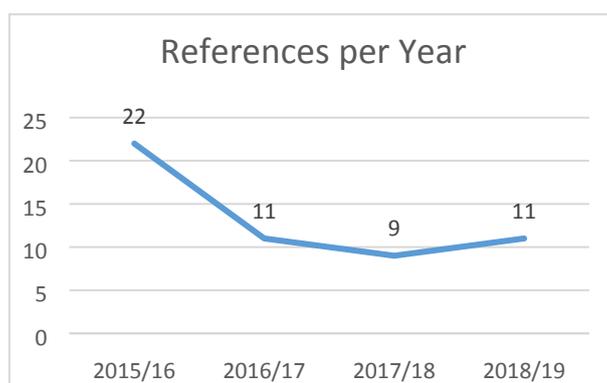
“There always will be overlap in Terms of Reference, but minimising this would help to speed up decision making.”

5. **RECOMMENDED:** That service committee Terms of Reference include:
- a. The Strategic Plan objectives that are the focus of the committee.
 - b. Specific examples of other appropriate key issues that are within the remit of the committee.
 - c. Explanation that all service committees are required to make decisions that fall within their given budget, however, these can be subject to a decision review if appropriate.

References between Committees

Interviewees stated that references between committees resulted in slower decision making and also caused confusion as to which committee “owned” the topic. The Draft Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy was an example of this, as it was considered at three service committees. In addition to this, it was stated that if references were made, some topics were considered by a disproportionate number of committees compared to the status of the work. Desktop research showed that the number of references between committees has halved since the committee system was first implemented (Figure 5). The reduced number references therefore evidenced improvement in the efficiency of decision making. Continued monitoring of this trend by Democratic Services would ensure for early identification of any issues. Remedial action could then be undertaken to resolve issues as appropriate.

Figure 5 – The Number of References Made Between Committees Each Year



Note: 2018/19 is not a full year.

“When committees refer across to other committees, such as the Sports Strategy, nobody seems to know who is owning this.”

“Things slow down when a committee makes a reference to another committee.”

Not every committee should have a say, as the Members of the committee are representatives of the Council.

Frequency and Number of Committee Meetings

The majority of survey respondents stated that there were the right number of committees (59%), however, a significant proportion (36%) stated that there were too many committees. The majority of respondents also stated that committees met at the right frequency (76%). There were, however, polarised views when comparing Member and Officer responses to these questions. Officers were more likely to say that there were too many committees and that they met too frequently, while the majority of Members stated that the current number of committees was appropriate. This discussion arose at interview, where it was broadly established that a reduction in the number of committees was preferable, as this would streamline decision making and ensure for greater efficiency. It was suggested that there could also be a reduction in the frequency of meetings, depending on the overall number of committees and the respective workload of each committee.

“In terms of reducing the number of committees, that’s a positive thing too.”

Process for Considering Issues that Span Multiple Committees

The survey did not specifically target the issue of cross-cutting topics, however, this was raised in the free text comments. Respondents stated that there was not a suitable protocol to deal with issues that spanned more than one committee, and that this tended to lead to issues jumping between multiple committees. During interviews, there were a number of suggestions for improving this process, however, these had the following limitations:

Approach	Drawbacks
Joint-Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political proportionality is calculated across all committees. By forming a joint-committee, there is a risk that the joint-committee could disproportionately represent groups.
Sub-Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-committees represent the same issues with regards to political proportionality as joint-committees. Sub-Committees tend to work more effectively when they are set up at the beginning of a municipal year, and this would not be feasible when considering that cross-cutting topics arise throughout the course of the year. There is consistent guidance stating that it is not good practice to set up sub-committees unless such a course is unavoidable.

Currently, the constitution states that the Policy and Resources Committee is the decision making Committee for cross-cutting issues. This approach could be supplemented by relevant Chairmen having discussions at the quarterly Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen meetings to identify pertinent items. If items were identified, Chairmen could informally agree to consider the item at a single committee, be it Policy and Resources or another appropriate service committee. This process could be enhanced to ensure that the Members of both committees have the opportunity to interrogate, contribute to and debate the appropriate reports prior to the committee meeting. All Members would then have the opportunity to participate at the decision making committee meeting, either as a Committee Member or Visiting Member.

“Quarterly meetings of Chairs and Vice-Chairs are now in a good rhythm. This helps with forward planning and identifying common interests.”

Chairmanship

Survey results showed that for the majority of committees, more than three out of four respondents felt they were effectively chaired. Free text responses indicated that effective chairmanship was dependent on a number of factors, however, various aspects were identified that could be improved to support Chairmen in their role. These were discussed in further detail during interviews.

Interviewees stated that at committee meetings, Chairmen needed to promote good quality debate. This meant that superfluous discussions needed to be shut down, and that a consistent approach to the order of debate needed to be established. On the whole, Members stated a preference for speaking in the order that they raised their hand, rather than starting at one side of the chamber and moving clockwise or anti-clockwise around the room. Furthermore, it was stated that when a procedural issue was raised, Chairmen were often presented with advice from both the Democratic Services Officer and Legal Representative. A mechanism for consistency and clarity on what advice each Officer provided therefore needed to be established.

“Chairmen need to control the meeting, inasmuch as ensuring that everyone gives their point of view while also knowing when to close down members who are waffling”.

It was commonly recognised during interviews that the effectiveness of a committee was intrinsically linked to good chairmanship. In order to promote effective chairmanship, it was asserted that all Members should be encouraged to consider becoming a Chairman, as this would broaden the pool of prospective candidates. Furthermore, it should be clearly established that this role was a facilitation function, and did not draw comparison with the role of Cabinet Members in the previous governance structure.

- 6. RECOMMENDED:** That the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Democratic Services Officer and Legal Officer at committee meetings be included in the Maidstone Borough Council Constitution, and that the Democratic Services Officer sits between the Chairman and Legal Officer.

Chairman Involvement during the Report Cycle

Survey results revealed that more than half of respondents considered Agenda Setting and Chairman's Briefing meetings to be effective and helpful, although Members viewed these more positively than Officers. Interviewees stated that Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen played an important role in ensuring that Officer reports considered all available options and did not contain deficiencies that would hinder decision making. In order to achieve this, it was crucial for Officers to ensure that Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen were fully informed throughout the report cycle. It was suggested that the approach to Agenda Setting and Chairman's Briefings could be improved, with the desired outcomes and objectives of Agenda Setting and Chairman's Briefing meetings being shared. This would focus discussions, reduce the duration of meetings and introduce a level of consistency for committee preparation.

"Chairmen need to work closely with Officers, as Members and Officers are a team."

7. **RECOMMENDED:** That a clear, consistent and disciplined approach is used for Agenda Setting and Chairman's Briefing meetings:
- The duration of these meetings should be minimised.
 - The focus of Agenda Setting is to ensure that the Work Programme reflects all of the topics that are to be considered by the Committee, and that each monthly meeting has an appropriately sized agenda.
 - The Chairman's Briefing is used to ensure that any issues with reports are raised with Officers in advance of the meeting, that Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have the opportunity to clarify issues raised in the reports and that any potential legislative or procedural issues are identified and planned for.

Items for Noting

A commonly discussed theme during interviews was the frequency of items for noting on committee agendas, which compromised the ability of the committee to allocate time to important decisions. This led to an additional area of desktop research, which aimed to understand this trend.

"Items for noting are debated, and then a decision item goes straight through."

Guidance within *Knowles: On Local Authority Meetings* states that agenda items "should not ordinarily be used merely to inform. i.e. items for noting; and the items placed before the committee should be those that unavoidably demand the committee/cabinet's consideration".

An assessment of agenda items for noting since the introduction of the committee system was undertaken. Items that included recommendations solely for the committee to note the report were evaluated to determine if the service committees had made an alternative resolution. Some reports, such as performance and budget monitoring updates, often only require noting. These were submitted to each service committee on a quarterly basis, and were included in the analysis. Standing items that required noting, such as the Committee Work Programme, were excluded.

“If a paper is for noting, then the Chairman should check it’s been read, ask if there are any questions – and if there are none, then it is noted and moved on.”

Since the introduction of the committee system, the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee had the highest average number of items to note per year (15), compared to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee (8.5), Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee (7.25) and Policy and Resources Committee (4.75). This could be a result of the Committee requesting update reports more regularly, or updates on the same topic being submitted multiple times throughout the course of the year.

When committees received 5 or more items for noting in a municipal year, the majority of these reports were simply noted. The exception to this was the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee in 2018/19, where 75% (6) noting items had an additional or changed resolution. Further exploration of this anomaly revealed that some Members of the Committee felt that they had not been engaged by Officers ahead of the report, and therefore the report recommendations were not sufficient. This established two trends; that Officers should not treat committees as a ‘rubber stamping’ mechanism for reports that were within their remit and that inappropriate submission of noting reports led to a higher demand on Officer time, as further actions arose from the committee resolutions.

It was suggested at interview that agendas should be front loaded with items for noting, so that these could be effectively resolved prior to debate on items for decisions. While it is good practice to shape an agenda to ensure for good quality of debate, stipulating where noting items should be considered introduces inflexibility. Where possible, these items should be considered early, however, there may be a need to consider a noting item at an alternative point on the agenda.

- 8. RECOMMENDED:** That guidance be included in the Maidstone Borough Council Constitution to ensure that only appropriate reports for noting are submitted to service committees.

Reports & Agenda Distribution

Survey and interview comments reinforced the view that reports must be read prior to the committee meeting in order to ensure for effective decision making. Members and Officers, however, differed in their opinions regarding the current timescales and approach to report writing and agenda distribution. Members stated that the time to consider a report ahead of decision making was not always sufficient, particularly when urgent items or urgent updates were published. This issue was exacerbated by a reduction in posted hard copy agenda packs to Members. Officers explained that in order to build in additional time for Members to read reports, they would need to commence report writing far in advance of the meeting, and information may not be readily available at this stage. While MBC was compliant with the legal obligation to publish agendas five clear working days before a committee, both Members and Officers stated that the introduction of paperless agendas was a positive step in promoting speed and cost efficiencies. It was recognised, however, that this approach may not be appropriate for everyone and that technical support would need to be available to ensure for the success of a paperless approach.

“It is important to ensure members have enough time to read papers and check information with officers who have written the report.”

“I am a digital convert. It does work.”

9. **RECOMMENDED:** That Maidstone Borough Council continues to move towards a ‘paperlite’ office approach for agendas and committee papers, although Members may retain their right to have paper copies of agendas. Where required, Members should have ready access to appropriate technical support to enhance their ability to use electronic documents.

Report Format and Information

Survey results showed that respondents felt that there was the right amount of information contained in reports to enable decision making. The Joint Transportation Board was the only committee where an equal proportion of respondents felt that there was the right amount of information (44%) and not enough information (44%). On the other hand, the Planning Committee had the highest proportion of respondents who stated that there was not enough information available (19%).

At interview, a number of changes to the reporting style was discussed. Firstly, it was stated that clarity regarding the purpose of each report could be improved. Although report recommendations demonstrate the desired outcome of a report, it was felt that by clearly including whether a report was for ‘Noting’, ‘Discussion’ or ‘Decision’, this would help those who read the reports. It was suggested that colour coded paper could support this, with a different colour being used for noting items, however, this would have a significant impact on printing costs and may not be an economically viable solution.

Secondly, the location of the 'Cross Cutting Issues and Implications' section was debated. At interview, a number of Members stated that including this section towards the front of reports would be beneficial in order to provide context to the report, while Officers predominantly believed that it provided an effective summary at the end of the report. As reports are designed to inform Member decision making, this relocation is suggested. It was agreed across Members and Officers that this section would need to be reshaped to reflect the new Strategic Plan, and careful consideration would need to be given to ensure that the information presented in the matrix did not lead to the detail of the report being skipped.

"You should have risks earlier in the report, so that Members can be informed of what they are deciding, and the risks associated with this, ahead of reading the information."

"The idea of putting implications at the end is that Members have the opportunity to consider the background and key issues. If the considerations were pushed to the beginning, it may stop things being put into context because the background had not yet been considered."

To support the relocation of the Cross Cutting Issues and Implications section, a common approach to completing this matrix during report writing would also be beneficial. This would ensure that these issues are considered consistently. Operational examples demonstrate that this is not currently completed in a consistent manner, which results in reports being submitted for publication that do not clearly demonstrate that they have been reviewed by all appropriate Officers.

Thirdly, it was agreed that reports should be as concise as possible. This could be achieved by using appendices more effectively, with the report providing a high level summary of the issues at hand and referencing specific details in the appendix. Furthermore, the use of visuals and diagrams may help to reduce report size, improve upon understanding and subsequently lead to better decision making.

"Moving towards a more visual approach and away from typical lengthy report writing may be beneficial."

Finally, it was stated that legislative requirements could be made clearer in reports to assist the committee. This would need to provide a summary of the legal requirements that were pertinent to the decision, and also clearly state that these matters were not to be debated, as they could not be changed. This could also be mentioned during the Officer presentation at the beginning of the item to ensure for clarity of understanding. This would ensure that unnecessary debate around unchangeable procedures or requirements are minimised.

“Legal and regulatory obligations need to be presented clearly in a report, and clearly stated, as this is vital information to know, even if it isn’t up for debate.”

10. RECOMMENDED: That report styles are altered to:

- Clearly demonstrate the purpose of the report on the front cover, as part of the Executive Summary.
- Include the Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications section at the front of reports.
- Align the Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications section to the new Strategic Plan objectives
- Ensure that sections of legislation relevant to a decision are clearly demonstrated.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, the length of covering reports are minimised through increased use of visuals and/or appendices.

11. RECOMMENDED: That a consistent approach to completing the Cross Cutting Issues and Implications section of reports is promoted: Building on the guidance contained in the committee report templates, the information and sign off columns should be fully completed by the report author, either with relevant information or “N/A” where appropriate. This information, along with the sign off column should then be updated or edited by appropriate Officers when the report is circulated for review.

Officer Presentations at Committee

At interview, it was acknowledged that Officer presentations at committees could be improved. It was stated that presentations should assume that the reports have been read, and therefore only provide a summary of key issues. Furthermore, it was suggested that presentations could be pre-recorded and made available prior to committee meetings. While this would ensure that the presentation was focussed, this approach does have limitations. This would lead to increased demand on Officer time, as they would have to dedicate time to pre-recording their presentation. It was also require a technological solution to ensure that this presentation was available to the public, so that everyone had access to the information. Finally, it may lead to Members seeing the presentation twice if they viewed it online, as it would need to be played at committee to ensure that everyone had seen it. This feedback, however, highlighted that other approaches, such as displaying visuals on the TV screens, would enhance presentations in some instances, and that Officers should not feel restricted to an oral presentation at committee.

“Introductions given by Officers are unnecessarily long sometimes.”

- 12. RECOMMENDED:** That any medium for sharing information with the committee, which adds value to the written report, should be considered by Officers e.g. the use of video or presentations.

Resolving Issues Outside of Committee

During interviews, it was commented that committee efficiency was hindered when issues were raised for the first time at the public meeting. These issues could range from disputing the content of reports, to procedural issues or moving motions that were not well worded. In the case of moving motions, if these were not worded effectively to provide clear direction, this had a further impact on the Officer's ability to implement a decision. It was acknowledged that these situations were unavoidable in some cases, however, they could be reduced through engagement with Officers prior to committee meetings. Furthermore, if issues did arise, Chairmen should be confident to use adjournments and deferrals where appropriate, in order to effectively resolve a matter.

"The worst thing, as a Chairman, is when someone comes up with something at committee and it sends everyone in a different direction on the night, and it's difficult to bring everyone back together."

"Too often, Members turn up at meetings and ask questions that should have been raised before the meeting."

"This could help Officers to consider it ahead of the meeting, or avoid embarrassment for Members if they are wrong. This should not be confrontational."

- 13. RECOMMENDED:** That Members are encouraged to approach Officers, via the Democratic Services Team, in advance of committee meetings to resolve queries regarding report contents, to fully form the wording of possible motions, or to seek advice on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and Other Significant Interests (OSIs).

Delegated Authority

The survey showed that less than half of respondents agreed that the scheme of delegation to Officers was appropriate (47%), with no significant difference in the response levels between Officers and Members. At interview, it was revealed that a common issue was the lack of clarity and transparency regarding the scope of decisions taken under delegated authority. There were disparate views between Members and Officers, with Members stating that while Officers had delegated authority for good reason, they needed to be aware of when this should not be used. Often, sensitive issues were best dealt with alongside Members at committee. A preference was also stated by Members for decisions to be weighted more heavily towards committees. Officers, on the other hand, stated that they felt they were doing their job by using delegated authority, and that they should be trusted to make decisions if they had the authority to do so. If used appropriately, this helped with the speed and efficiency of decision making. It would appear, therefore, that transparency could be improved, as this would ensure that Officers can continue to use delegated authority appropriately, while this would also allow Members to have greater insight into the decisions being made. To support this, guidance could be shared to ensure that Members and Officers alike have a common understanding of delegated authority and when it is to be used. Work is currently being undertaken to produce a framework, outlining the recording and publishing of Officer decisions, in line with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Relations 2014. This work is due to be concluded and the process in place for the start of the 2019/20 municipal year.

“A very regular dialogue about roles of Officers and Members takes place, and there are many occasions where the system of delegation is questioned.”

“Openness and transparency is important.”

Furthermore, it was explained that delegated authority was approved by Full Council each year, through the Council adopting the Constitution, and therefore any changes to delegations needed to be clearly understood at the point of approval. In 2018, a document containing tracked changes, outlining how the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation had been amended following previous resolutions of Council, was not provided to Full Council at the annual meeting, and the issue of transparency was raised at the meeting.

In previous years when amendments to the Constitution were made, resolutions outlining the changes required in general terms, and then a final resolution mandating the amending of the Constitution accordingly were passed. The Monitoring Officer would then effect these changes under delegation. However, a new approach has been trialled recently, whereby the proposed changes to the Constitution are drafted using tracked changes and recommended to Council for adoption. This has improved transparency in what members are approving and provides a clear audit trail of the changes made. To enhance transparency further, it is suggested that a separate resolution is agreed at the annual Council meeting, which specifically approves the scheme of delegation to Officers, along with a reference as to where the scheme of delegation can be found in the Constitution.

To further support this key issue, it would be helpful to understand how MBC compares to other Local Authorities when considering delegated authority. This would help to demonstrate whether the issues raised were a result of an anomalous scheme of delegation at MBC. If MBC was comparable to other Local Authorities, then it would suggest that further training could be provided to ensure that clarity of the current system is improved.

14. **RECOMMENDED:** That a record of officer decisions made under delegated authority be introduced and frequently shared with Members.
15. **RECOMMENDED:** That the scope of delegated authority, and the process for using this, is shared and reinforced with Members and Officers, to ensure for consistency of understanding.
16. **RECOMMENDED:** That Full Council is presented with a “tracked changes” document outlining adjustments to the Constitution and the scheme of delegation when it is requested to approve changes.
17. **RECOMMENDED:** That a comparison of delegated authority across other Local Authorities using the committee system is undertaken.

Member Briefings and Information Sharing

Interview responses showed that Member Briefings were considered an effective way of sharing information, however, they needed to be disciplined in order to ensure they had maximum impact. It was stated that briefings should be limited to the discussion of a single complex topic, or a combination of interrelated, less complex, topics. Furthermore, these opportunities needed to ensure that strategic topics were discussed, rather than covering the minutiae of topics. It was highlighted that it was often the same Members who attended Member Briefings. Although there was limited flexibility in terms of the timing of these briefings, by ensuring that Member Briefings were considered to be increasingly focussed and valuable, this may support an improved attendance from Members.

“Writing a report for noting is a waste of time, a briefing session is far more powerful and engaging.”

Information could also be shared with Members relating to the committee work programmes, to ensure that all Members are able to easily access information relevant to their interests. This is currently achieved through the monthly Member Bulletin, and is circulated to all Members at the beginning of each month. To improve the accessibility of this information, it was suggested that this information could also be included in the Weekly Notice of Meetings.

18. **RECOMMENDED:** That, where appropriate, alternative approaches such as briefings, are used to provide updates in order to minimise the number of reports that are submitted to committees.

Training

Building on the Learning and Development Charter, adopted by the Democracy Committee at its meeting on 5th September 2018, it was acknowledged that there was potential to improve upon the current training offer for Members. Officers would also benefit from training, however, this was not covered by the charter. Feedback suggested that combined Member-Officer training would be valuable, however, it was recognised that certain topics would not be relevant to all. While the upskilling of both Members and Officers was crucial, it was stated that a key outcome from all training needed to be an increased level of confidence for those who participated in the training.

The training that could be provided to Members and Officers was:

- Role playing a committee so that the functions and procedures were familiar. This could potentially be done as part of the snap committees at the beginning of the municipal year.
- Procedural training, such as forming or amending motions at committee.
- A broad introduction to the functions, workings and governance of the Council.
- A tour of the aspects of the Council that related to each committee.
- Public speaking training to improve upon confidence and the effectiveness of presentations and debates.

“Scenario based training would help.”

“We can often get lost in procedures, and more training would help to avoid this.”

Suggestions for Officer training centred largely on report writing and presentations at committee. A current rolling programme of report writing training is in place, and it was agreed that this has led to improved reports. This could be expanded to ensure that all Officers have access to the training.

Suggestions for Member training focussed largely on the induction of new Members, and outlined a number of areas that could be considered:

- An introduction to expectations for Members, such as involvement and behaviour at committee.
- Mentoring and buddying schemes.
- Procedural guidance, to build on the aforementioned role playing training.

“On the job training is best.”

“Members ought to feel free to talk to their colleagues, regardless of parties.”

To support the above training, written guidance could also be developed. Suggestions included advice on how to conduct oneself at committee and a document providing key phrases that could be used in meetings to ensure that all Members could confidently contribute to debates or resolution wording. Furthermore, at the first meeting of each municipal year, Committee Members could be provided with a brief information sheet that outlines the purpose of the committee they sit on, services relevant to the specific committee and other relevant information that would assist in decision making throughout the year.

The formation of a training programme is outside of the scope of the Committee Structure Review, but it is to be considered as a separate project.

Review of the Constitution

Feedback from Members and Officers indicated that in order to support the training given to Members and Officers, work could be undertaken to simplify the Constitution and produce a concise, 'easy-read' version with clear page and section numbering. Further development could include a gap-analysis of the current content, and the correction of inconsistencies and duplication. The delegated authorities currently within the Constitution could also be reviewed in light of a comparison between MBC and other Local Authorities to ensure for consistency of understanding. This work has commenced and the findings of the Constitution Review will be presented to the Democracy Committee.

"Avoid information overload and put it in an easily accessible format."

Options

Suggested Alternative Options

A variety of thematic approaches were suggested for refreshing the committee system. These have not been modelled as there are significant challenges with the implementation of these options. The options, with positive and negative considerations, are outlined below.

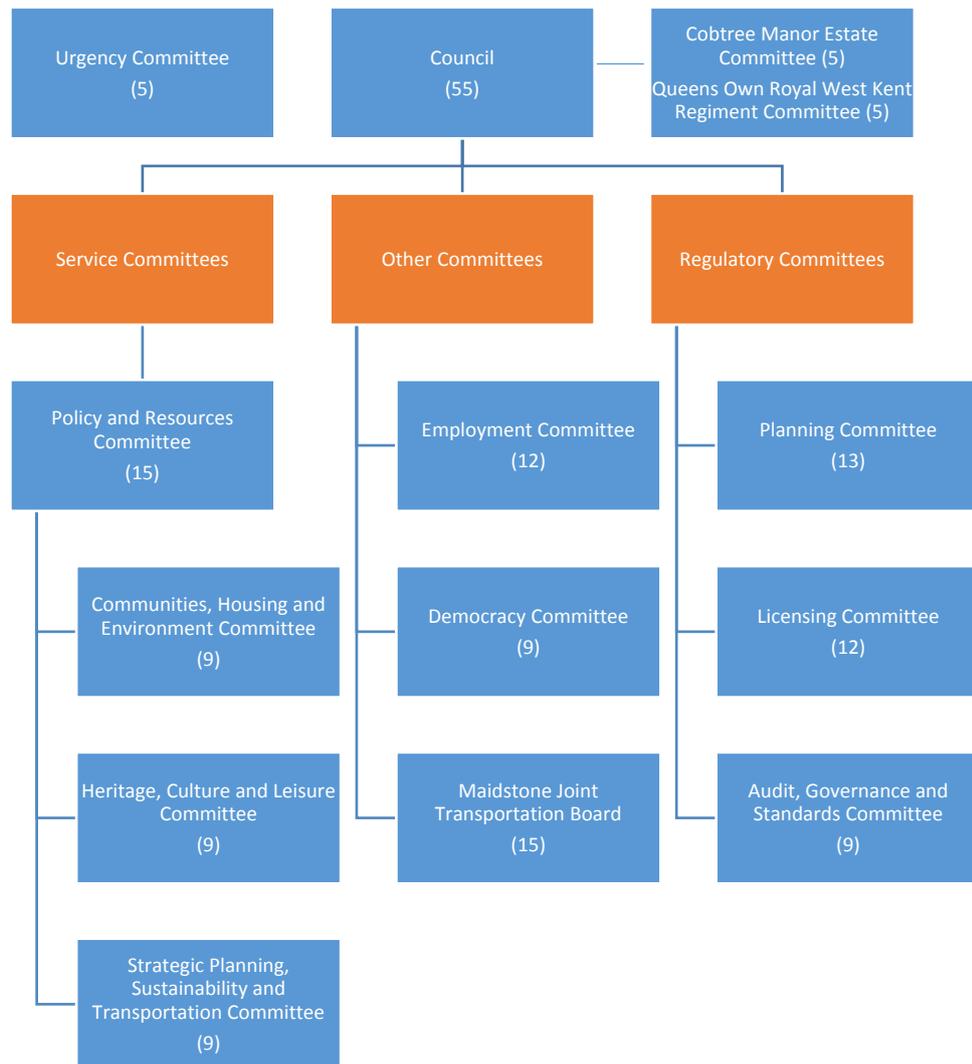
Option	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Aligning Committees to the Roles of Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of committee purpose - Consistency of Officer attendance. - Reduced duplication of committee functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would not be sustainable if there was a change in organisational structure or frequent turnover of roles. - Decision making would suffer if there was a vacancy for a prolonged period of time.
Aligning Committees to Key Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of committee purpose - Consistency of Officer attendance. - Reduced duplication of committee functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The definition of 'Key Services' is subjective - To achieve a Committee structure based on the 'Key Services' that does not increase the number of Committees (and therefore costs), services would need to be grouped together - This could lead to Committees with a lack of focus and even more overlap in their terms of reference
Aligning Committees to Common Skillsets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committees would take decisions on matters that require common approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more sustainable and applicable approach would be to align Committee Membership based on the functions of the committee. - Skillsets change every year, depending on elections and the experience gained by Councillors. This may mean that Committees would need to change every year
Merging Economic Development and Housing Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased exposure for Economic Development would ensure that it is given an appropriate level of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would create an imbalanced workload across service committees. - When considering Head of Service responsibilities, there are clearer synergies between Economic Development and the current functions of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee than housing.
Merging Economic Development and Strategic Spatial Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased exposure for Economic Development would ensure that it is given an appropriate level of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The workload of the current SPST Committee is high and it was not considered appropriate to expand this further.

Appendix 1 - Committee Structure Review Report

Using the collated evidence, various committee structure options have been developed. These options consider the arrangements for service committees and other committees independently. The options are then amalgamated to create a final 'full' structure. The names of committees are suggestions only, and are designed to transparently reflect the purpose of each committee. The suggested committee membership size is included in brackets.

A 'Do Nothing' option has been outlined below, for context.

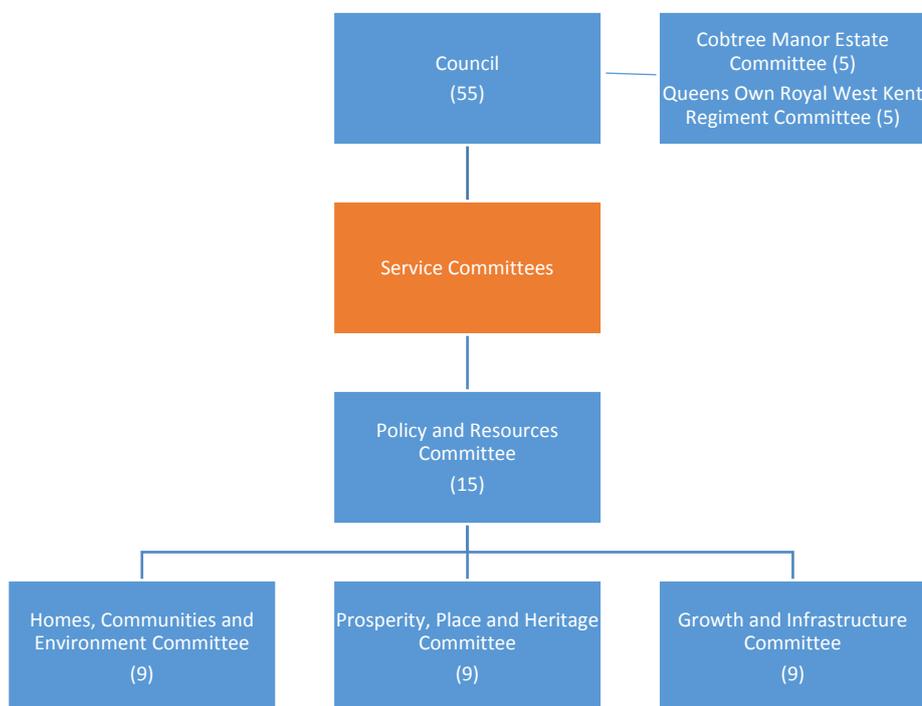
Option 1 – Do Nothing



This shows the current committee arrangements at Maidstone Borough Council. This is not recommended as it would not address the issues raised throughout the evidence gathering, and would not result in any improvements to the system.

Service Committees

Option 2 – Adjustments to the Current Committees



“These would need to be multi-disciplinary, and the focus should be on outcomes rather than on shaping it to the teams who are working on stuff.”

This option would see the current service committees adjusted. Amendments would be made to Terms of Reference to reflect the objectives and priorities in the new Strategic Plan, to ensure that committees are focussed on outcomes rather than activity. The Urgency Committee would be decommissioned, as an urgent meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee would perform the same function.

“The focus needs to be on the purpose, rather than the activity.”

An adjustment to committee names would ensure that previous perceptions of committees are not carried into the new governance model, and would also help to establish the strategic priorities that each committee is responsible for.

Policy and Resources Committee

Introduction

The current functions are retained excluding Economic Development which moves to Prosperity, Place and Heritage Committee. The functionality to consider any topics that cannot be assigned to a single committee is included specifically in the Terms of Reference.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Responsible for oversight of progress against the whole Strategic Plan and overarching matters

Functions

- To make recommendations to Council on budget and policy matters;
- To provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, determining policies in areas within its terms of reference and any cross cutting policies that impact on other Committee areas;
- To make decisions regarding land and property including acquisition (by agreement or compulsorily), disposal, appropriation and development with the exception of the declaration of Open Space surplus to requirements for the purposes of advertising and disposing of open space under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 or any other similar enactment and the final decision on the disposal of Open Space (unless delegated to officers or within the remit of another Committee);
- Retain a strategic overview of risk management;
- Be responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other Committee and to determine any disputes or differences between Committees; and
- To determine planning applications referred to it by the Head of Planning and Development.

Policies that are reserved for P&R are People Strategy and Workforce Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Corporate Improvement Plan, Information Management Strategy, Risk Management Strategy including Counter Fraud, Commissioning Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Council Accommodation Strategy and Emergency and Resilience Planning.

This Committee would remain responsible for corporate services (including Shared Services) which would include Revenues and Benefits, Property and Procurement, Corporate Finance, ICT, Legal Services and Policy, Communications and Governance.

Homes, Communities and Environment Committee

Introduction

Formerly the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, this would be responsible for the Strategic Plan objectives 'Homes and Communities' and 'Safe, Clean and Green'. This would include parks, green spaces and biodiversity in the remit of the Housing, Communities and Environment Committee. Furthermore, responsibility for the crematorium and cemetery would be transferred to the committee.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Homes and Communities
 - A diverse range of community activities is encouraged
 - Existing housing is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being
 - Homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented
 - Community facilities and services in the right place at the right time to support communities
- Safe, Clean and Green
 - People feel safe and are safe
 - A Borough that is recognised as clean and well cared for by everyone
 - An environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough
 - Everyone has access to high quality parks and green spaces

Functions

This Committee will be responsible for setting the Council's policy around key issues in relation to Housing, Communities and Environment including the Housing Allocations Policy, Waste Management Strategy, Recycling Strategy, Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, Housing Strategy, the Parish Charter, Licensing Strategy and Policies, Street Scene and Environmental Strategy, Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Plan and Renewable Energy Strategy. The Committee would retain the function of meeting as the Council's Statutory Crime and Disorder Committee twice yearly. Key services this Committee would be responsible for would include Waste Collection, Street Scene, Environmental Enforcement, Housing Services, Parks and Open Spaces, Environmental Health, Licensing, Community Safety and Bereavement Services. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

Prosperity, Place and Heritage Committee

Introduction

Formerly the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, this would be responsible for the Strategic Plan objective 'A Thriving Place'. This would mean that parks, green spaces, the crematorium and cemetery are removed from the remit of the current committee Terms of Reference, with Economic Development included. Museums would be retained as part of the committee, as these are linked to tourism and economic development.

"I can see the synergies in aligning Economic Development to Heritage, Culture and Leisure [...] it is well known that arts and heritage are good regenerators."

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- A Thriving Place
 - A vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors
 - Our town and village centres are fit for the future
 - Skills levels and earning potential of our residents are raised
 - Local commercial and inward investment is increased

Functions

This Committee will be responsible for setting the Council's policy around key issues in relation to Heritage, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Economic Development. Some key areas of responsibility will be oversight and monitoring of the contracts for the Leisure Centre and Hazlitt Theatre, as well as the long term plans for the Museum. Responsibilities around Economic Development will include setting, reviewing and monitoring the Council's Economic Development Strategy and considering any key Economic Development projects that require Council funding. The Committee will also have responsibility for Maidstone Market. Key strategies and policies this Committee would be responsible for will include the Economic Development Strategy, Commercialisation Strategy, Festivals and Events Policy, Tourism Destination Management Plan, and Museums 20 year Development Plan. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

Growth and Infrastructure Committee

Introduction

Formerly the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, this would be responsible for the Strategic Plan objective 'Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure'.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

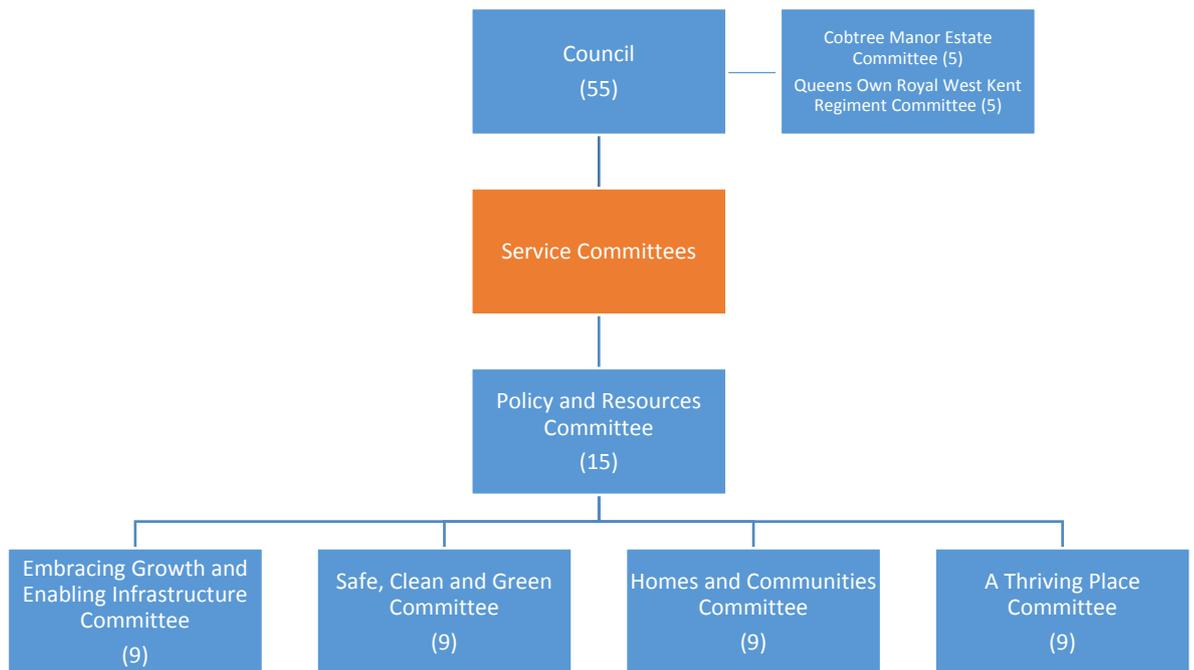
- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
 - The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed
 - Key employment sites are delivered
 - Housing need is met including affordable housing
 - Sufficient infrastructure is planned to meet the demands of growth

Functions

This Committee will be responsible for developing the Council's policies, including Planning Policies, to help the Council achieve its Strategic Objective in this area. Some of these policies will be required to be referred to full Council for approval, for example policies that will become part of the Development Plan, but the Committee will take the lead role in developing and setting the direction of these policies prior to submission to Full Council for approval. The Committee will be responsible for services that relate to this strategic objective including Development Management, Planning Enforcement, Parking Services, Building Control and Planning Policy. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

This is the preferred option for service committees, as it ensures that the priorities of the new Strategic Plan are covered efficiently. Furthermore, it does not require significant additional resource to implement or service. This supports both the efficiency and cost-neutrality aspects of the original committee system principles.

Option 3 – New Committees Aligned to the New Strategic Plan



“Our committees should be focused around the 4 strategic outcomes.”

The strategic objectives of the Council, and the implementation of these in a consensual way, is the key thing to look at.”

This option would see all current service committees, except for the Policy and Resources Committee, decommissioned. Four new service committees would be created to reflect the objectives in the new Strategic Plan. The Urgency Committee would be removed as an urgent meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee would perform the same function.

Policy and Resources Committee

Introduction

The current functions are retained excluding Economic Development which moves to A Thriving Place Committee. The functionality to consider any topics that cannot be assigned to a single committee is included specifically within the Terms of Reference.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Responsible for oversight of progress against the whole Strategic Plan and overarching matters

Functions

- To make recommendations to Council on budget and policy matters;
- To provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, determining policies in areas within its terms of reference and any cross cutting policies that impact on other Committee areas;
- To make decisions regarding land and property including acquisition (by agreement or compulsorily), disposal, appropriation and development with the exception of the declaration of Open Space surplus to requirements for the purposes of advertising and disposing of open space under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 or any other similar enactment and the final decision on the disposal of Open Space (unless delegated to officers or within the remit of another Committee);
- Retain a strategic overview of risk management;
- Be responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other Committee and to determine any disputes or differences between Committees; and
- To determine planning applications referred to it by the Head of Planning and Development.

Policies that are reserved for P&R are People Strategy and Workforce Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Corporate Improvement Plan, Information Management Strategy, Risk Management Strategy including Counter Fraud, Commissioning Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Council Accommodation Strategy and Emergency and Resilience Planning.

This Committee would remain responsible for corporate services (including Shared Services) which would include Revenues and Benefits, Property and Procurement, Corporate Finance, ICT, Legal Services and Policy, Communications and Governance.

Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure Committee

Introduction

This committee would be responsible for policy matters relating to the Strategic Plan Objective 'Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure'.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
 - The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed
 - Key employment sites are delivered
 - Housing need is met including affordable housing
 - Sufficient infrastructure is planned to meet the demands of growth

Functions

This Committee will be responsible for developing the Council's policies, including Planning Policies, to help the Council achieve its Strategic Objective in this area. Some of these policies will be required to be referred to full Council for approval, for example policies that will become part of the Development Plan, but the Committee will take the lead role in developing and setting the direction of these policies prior to submission to Full Council for approval. The Committee will be responsible for services that relate to this strategic objective including Development Management, Planning Enforcement, Parking Services, Building Control and Planning Policy. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

Safe, Clean and Green Committee

Introduction

This committee would be responsible for policy matters relating to the Strategic Plan Objective 'Safe, Clean and Green'.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Safe, Clean and Green
 - People feel safe and are safe
 - A Borough that is recognised as clean and well cared for by everyone
 - An environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough
 - Everyone has access to high quality parks and green spaces

Functions

This Committee would be responsible for setting the Council's policies such as the Waste Management Strategy, Recycling Strategy, Street Scene and Environmental Strategy, Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Plan and Renewable Energy Strategy. The Committee would perform the statutory function of the Crime and Disorder Committee twice yearly. Key services in this Committee would include Waste Collection, Street Scene, Environmental Enforcement, Parks and Open Spaces, Environmental Health, Community Safety and Bereavement Services (including the Crematorium and Cemetery). Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

Homes and Communities Committee

Introduction

This committee would be responsible for policy matters relating to the Strategic Plan Objective 'Homes and Communities'.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Homes and Communities
 - A diverse range of community activities is encouraged
 - Existing housing is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being
 - Homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented
 - Community facilities and services in the right place at the right time to support communities

Functions

This Committee would be responsible for setting the Council's policies such as the Housing Allocations Policy, Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, Housing Strategy, the Parish Charter and Licensing Strategies and Policies. Key services this Committee would be responsible for would include Housing Services and Licensing and Community Safety. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

A Thriving Place Committee

Introduction

This committee would be responsible for policy matters relating to the Strategic Plan Objective 'A Thriving Place'.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

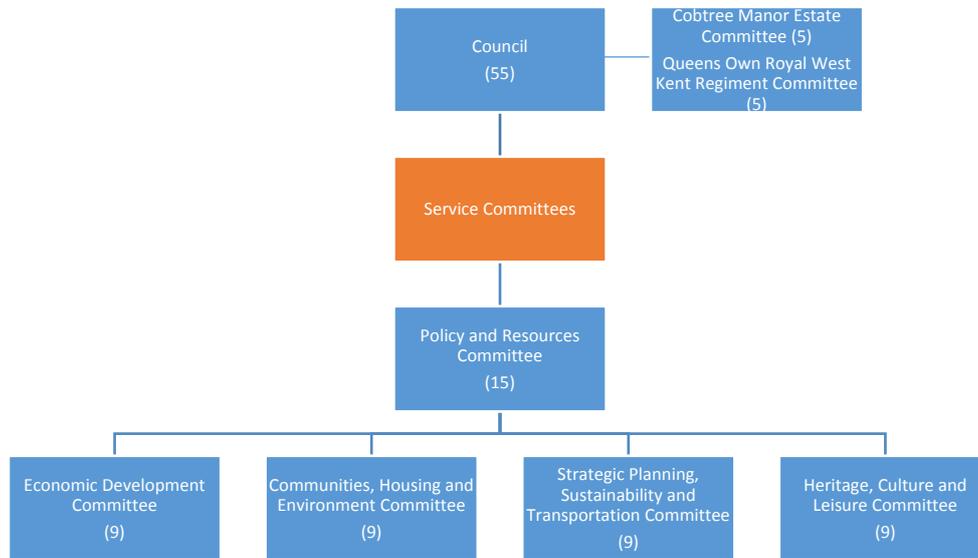
- A Thriving Place
 - A vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors
 - Our town and village centres are fit for the future
 - Skills levels and earning potential of our residents are raised
 - Local commercial and inward investment is increased

Functions

This Committee will be responsible for setting the Council's policy around key issues in relation to Heritage, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Economic Development. Some key areas of responsibility will be oversight and monitoring of the contracts for the Leisure Centre and Hazlitt Theatre, as well as the long term plans for the Museum. Responsibilities around Economic Development will include setting, reviewing and monitoring the Council's Economic Development Strategy and considering any key Economic Development projects that require Council funding. The Committee will also have responsibility for Maidstone Market. Key strategies and policies this Committee would be responsible for will include the Economic Development Strategy, Commercialisation Strategy, Festivals and Events Policy, Tourism Destination Management Plan, and Museums 20 year Development Plan. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

This option is not recommended as although it would focus committees on outcomes, it would require the creation of an extra service committee. This contradicts feedback that has been provided throughout the evidence gathering exercises. The required resource to service an additional committee also represents a significant risk to the delivery of this model, as the streamlining of other committees would not balance the capacity to deliver the model. Furthermore, there would be substantial investment in the re-writing of the Constitution, which would be required each time the Strategic Plan is refreshed or renewed, which does not represent a sustainable approach.

Option 4 – Creation of an Economic Development Committee



“Economic development in its broadest sense is the most important, fundamental driving force of the wellbeing of the borough. It needs to have its own committee.”

“because Economic Development currently sits with Policy and Resources, it doesn’t get enough air time.”

This option would see the current committee system maintained, with a separate Economic Development Committee created to perform functions currently within the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Policy and Resources Committee

Introduction

The current functions are retained excluding Economic Development which moves to the Economic Development Committee. The functionality to consider any topics that cannot be assigned to a single committee is included specifically in the Terms of Reference.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Responsible for oversight of progress against the whole Strategic Plan and overarching matters

Functions

- To make recommendations to Council on budget and policy matters;
- To provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, determining policies in areas within its terms of reference and any cross cutting policies that impact on other Committee areas;
- To make decisions regarding land and property including acquisition (by agreement or compulsorily), disposal, appropriation and development with the exception of the declaration of Open Space surplus to requirements for the purposes of advertising and disposing of open space under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 or any other similar enactment and the final decision on the disposal of Open Space (unless delegated to officers or within the remit of another Committee);
- Retain a strategic overview of risk management;
- Be responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other Committee and to determine any disputes or differences between Committees; and
- To determine planning applications referred to it by the Head of Planning and Development.

Policies that are reserved for P&R are People Strategy and Workforce Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Corporate Improvement Plan, Information Management Strategy, Risk Management Strategy including Counter Fraud, Commissioning Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Council Accommodation Strategy and Emergency and Resilience Planning.

This Committee would remain responsible for corporate services (including Shared Services) which would include Revenues and Benefits, Property and Procurement, Corporate Finance, ICT, Legal Services and Policy, Communications and Governance.

Economic Development Committee

Introduction

This new committee would be responsible solely for Economic Development matters.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- A Thriving Place
 - Skills levels and earning potential of our residents are raised
 - Local commercial and inward investment is increased

Functions

This committee would be responsible for the Council's Economic Development Strategy and considering any key Economic Development projects that require Council funding. Key strategies and policies this Committee would be responsible for will include the Economic Development Strategy and Commercialisation Strategy. Additionally, the Committee will be responsible for strategic performance, budget related staffing matters and budget monitoring for its area, in addition to submitting budget estimates and capital programmes within its area to P&R Committee with a view to P&R Committee submitting the budget to Council.

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

Introduction

This committee would remain unchanged.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Homes and Communities
 - Existing housing is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being
 - Homelessness and rough sleeping are prevented
 - Community facilities and services in the right place at the right time to support communities
- Safe, Clean and Green
 - People feel safe and are safe
 - A Borough that is recognised as clean and well cared for by everyone
 - An environmentally attractive and sustainable Borough

Functions

The functions of the committee would remain unchanged.

Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

Introduction

This committee would remain unchanged.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
 - The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed
 - Key employment sites are delivered
 - Housing need is met including affordable housing
 - Sufficient infrastructure is planned to meet the demands of growth
- A Thriving Place
 - Our town and village centres are fit for the future

Functions

The functions of the committee would remain unchanged.

Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

Introduction

This committee would remain unchanged.

Strategic Plan Objective/s

- Homes and Communities
 - A diverse range of community activities is encouraged
- Safe, Clean and Green
 - Everyone has access to high quality parks and green spaces
- A Thriving Place
 - A vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors
 - Our town and village centres are fit for the future

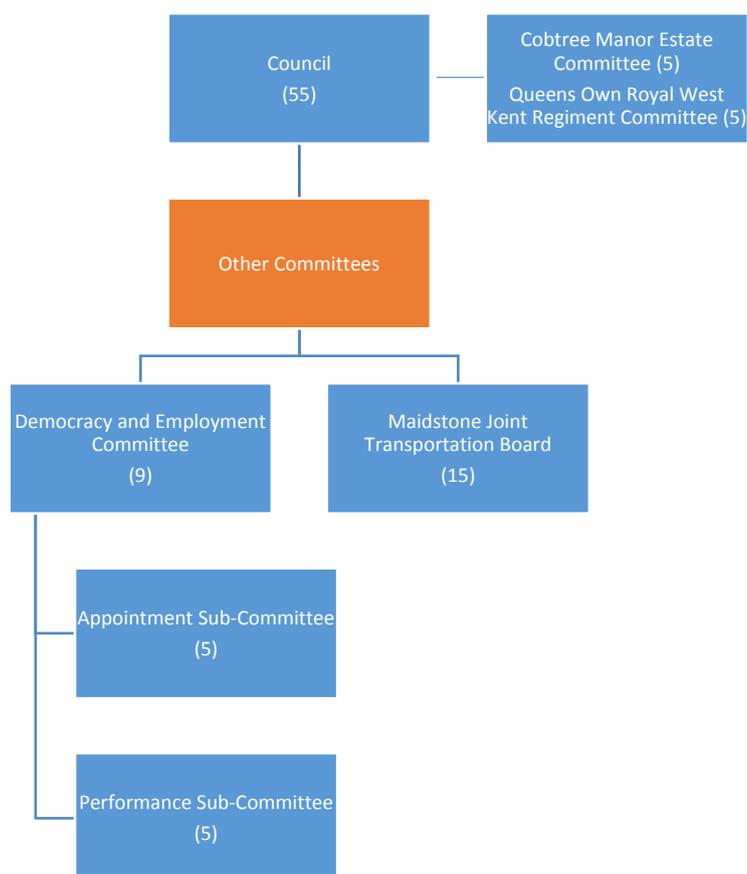
Functions

The functions of the committee would remain unchanged.

This option is not recommended as the creation of an Economic Development Committee would not create a balanced workload across the service committees. Furthermore, lines of accountability for Officers would be unclear, with Officers required to attend multiple committees in order to fully represent their portfolio of work. The creation of an additional committee would mean that cost neutrality is jeopardised, while this arrangement creates a lack of clarity regarding which committee is responsible for Strategic Plan objectives.

Other Committees

Option 5 – Democracy and Employment Committee with Sub-Committees

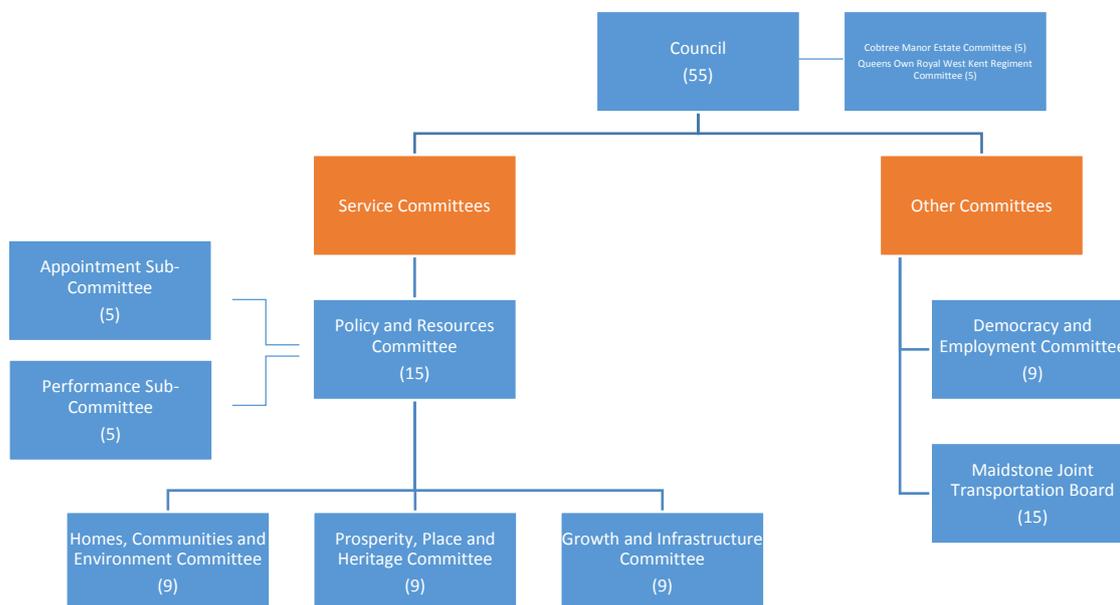


This option would see the functions of the Democracy Committee and Employment Committee merged. It was suggested that this could be called a General Purposes Group, however, it was felt that naming this as the Democracy and Employment Committee allowed for greater transparency regarding the function of the Committee. The Democracy and Employment Committee would then form sub-committees to perform the functions that currently fall within the remit of the Employment Committee sub-committees. This allows for the streamlining of committees, in line with the feedback received, and also ensures that the Democracy and Employment Committee has a healthy workload throughout the municipal year.

“The work should be called something different, although the function should continue.”

“A General Purposes Group that looks at the internal functions of the Council.”

Option 6 – Policy and Resources Sub-Committees



This option would see the Democracy Committee and Employment Committee merged. The current sub-committees of the Employment Committee would then be included under the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee as the Appointment Sub-Committee and Performance Sub-Committee. This has the same advantages as Option 4, however, it promotes the participation of a wider group of members due to the membership size of the Policy and Resources Committee. This also allows for Group Leaders to participate in the sub-committees, as they are typically members of the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Maidstone Joint Transportation Board is included in the above structures. As this board is subject to an agreed Memorandum of Understanding, signed by both Kent County Council and MBC, any changes to the board will need to be agreed by both authorities.

Conclusion

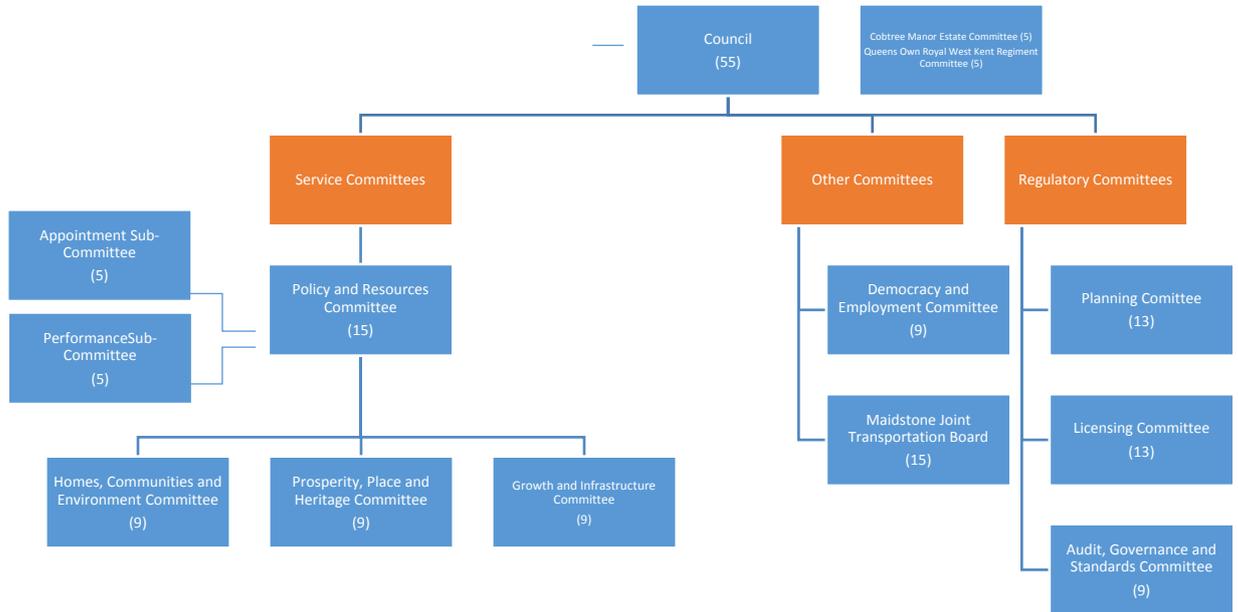
In conclusion, the objective and principles of the original committee system have been met in many cases. The evidence demonstrates that the implementation of the committee system has resulted in greater Member engagement in decision making, while cost neutrality has also been achieved. While opportunities for participation have improved, there have been varied opinions regarding whether this has improved the quality of decisions made. Equally, it has been raised that these opportunities have not always been taken up or fully understood. The Working Group therefore spent much time on this aspect, with the resultant recommendations attempting to address this issue. When considering the effectiveness and efficiency of decision making, and ensuring that the structure is not cumbersome or bureaucratic, elements of the system could be developed. To address this, the number of committees could be reduced, the Constitution could be developed to provide clarity regarding the remit of each committee and a programme of training could be explored to promote a consistent understanding of the system.

To improve decision making processes, a number of adjustments could be made to the committee structure. The structure outlined in Option 2 represents the recommended way to streamline service committee decision making, as this aligns decision making to the new Strategic Plan objectives and minimises the overlap of functions. This also maintains cost neutrality. Furthermore, efficiencies could be achieved through the amalgamation of the Democracy Committee and Employment Committee and the decommissioning of the Urgency Committee. The preferred option for this would be Option 6, as this has the benefits of streamlining committees while also providing an appropriate way to include Group Leaders on the Appointment and Performance Groups.

The suggested model eradicates many of the issues that were raised regarding overlap of Terms of Reference and committee responsibilities. There is one aspect of decision making, however, that could not be allocated to a single committee in any of the options. The Strategic Plan objective Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure contains "The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed." There is a distinction between master planning where MBC owns, or has an interest in, the property and the formation of broader spatial policy to encourage development and investment in infrastructure. It is important that the Council's role as the planning authority, and its other roles, are kept separate. It is entirely appropriate for the Growth and Infrastructure Committee to be responsible for spatial policy, however, the Policy and Resources Committee should be responsible for master planning where the property is owned by the Council. This will be clarified when the committee Terms of Reference are drafted, with further conversations to take place to ensure that potential nuances are understood and that the process for these are clearly defined.

This would mean that the recommended overall structure would appear as below (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Final Suggested Governance Model



19. RECOMMENDED: That a new structure for committees is introduced based on a combination of the service committees and other committees outlined in Options 2 and 6.

	Member Support		Salaries		Total	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
2014/15	412,530	394,577	128,840	136,803	541,370	531,380
2015/16	412,530	346,571	148,610	143,468	561,140	490,039
2016/17	362,540	345,935	165,850	120,803	528,390	466,738
2017/18	365,840	351,357	145,090	146,981	510,930	498,338

Committee System Feedback Survey

Methodology

The survey was open between 4th October and 29th October 2018 and was circulated to Members and Officers by the Democratic Services Manager.

There were a total of 42 respondents to the survey. Of these 25 were from Members (45% response rate) and 17 were from Officers (14% response rate).

Some questions were posed only to Members; this is noted in the commentary.

Findings

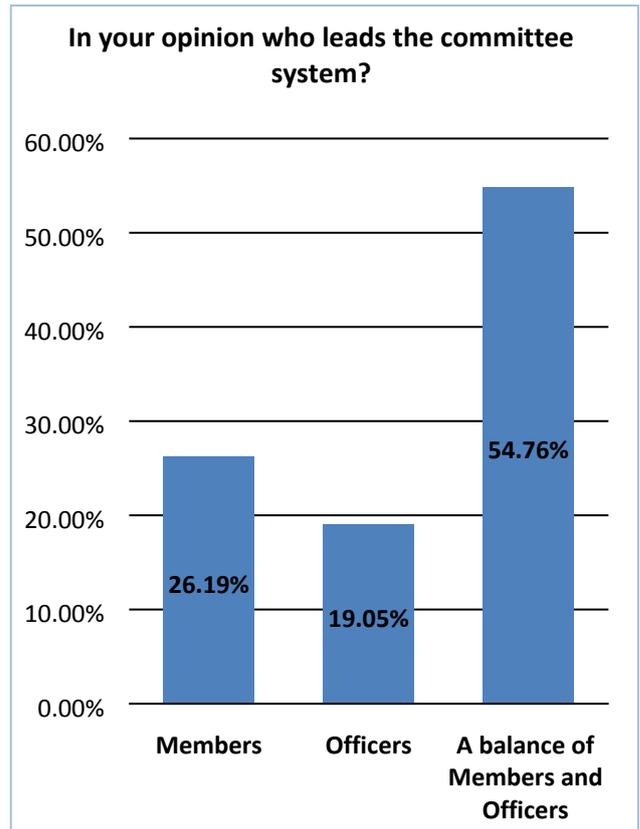
- Members understanding of how to move a motion, make an amendment to a motion and how to speak at a meeting is good. There were no questions assessing Officer's knowledge of the Committee process but one comment did mention procedure training for Officers.
- There was consensus between Members and Officers that Committee Clerks and lead Officers provide good Committee support.
- The Joint Transportation Board and the Urgency Committee are the least positively viewed Committees, particularly in terms of leadership, membership and decision making.
- There are polarised views between Members and Officers in terms of the right number and frequency of meetings with Officers more likely than Members to say that there are too many meetings and they occur too frequently.
- There is a view, shared by Members and Officers that the current Committee system does not allow for quick decision making.
- The majority of both Members and Officer believe that Committee Terms of Reference overlap.

Committee System Leadership

All respondents were asked 'In your opinion who leads the committee system. The graph to the right shows that the majority of respondents felt that the leadership of the Committee system was balanced between Members and Officers.

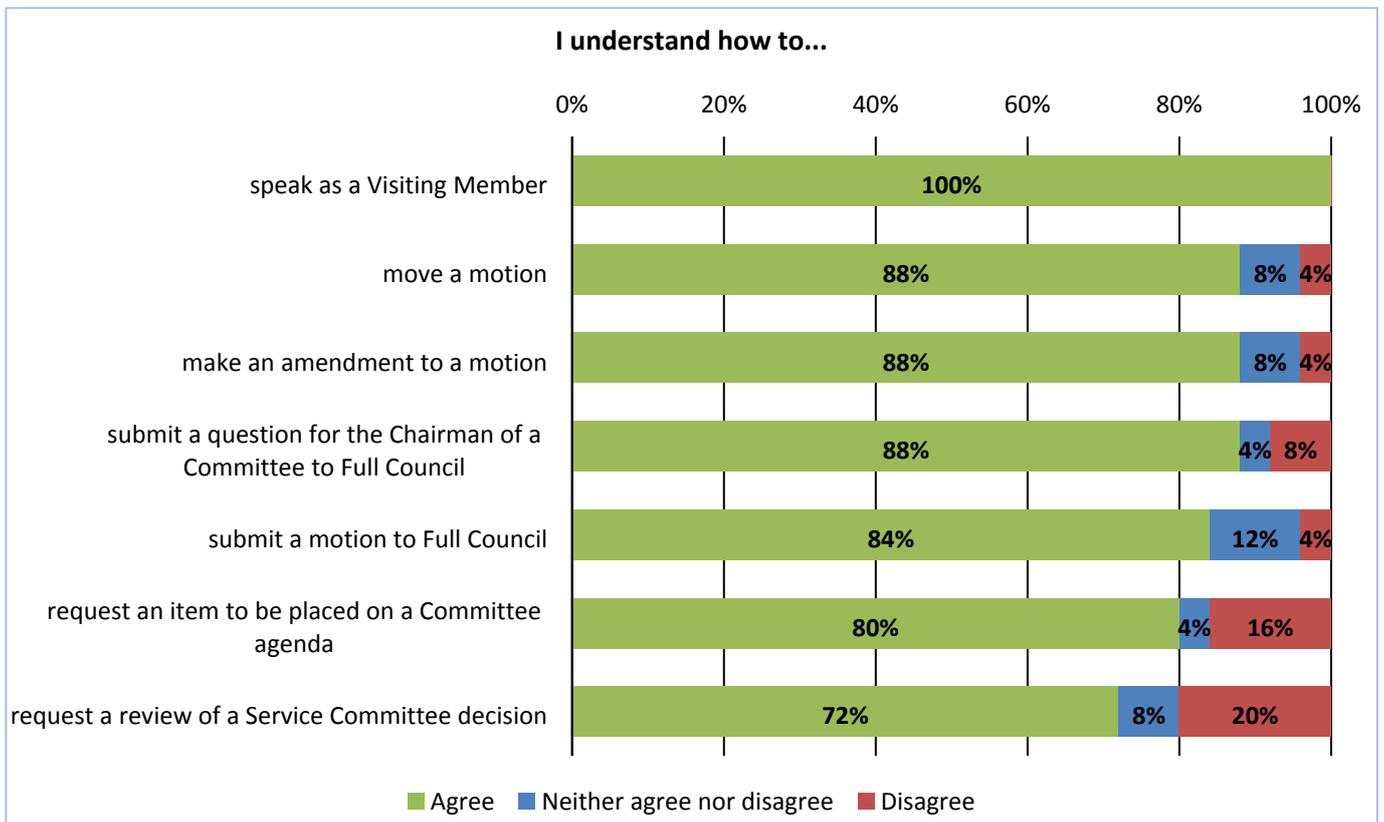
When the data is assessed by respondent type it shows that Officers were more likely to state there was a balance, with 64.7% responding this way compared to 48% of members.

There was a greater proportion of Members responding that Officers lead the Committee system with 28% compared to 6%.



Member Understanding & Confidence

Members were asked a series of questions about their understanding of how to assert their rights as Councillors. All 25 member respondents answered all components of this question (respondent is equivalent to 4%).



Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis

Positively, every member said they understand how to speak as visiting member and across the series of questions understanding was high. Requesting a review of a service committee decision had the lowest proportion agreeing at 72% with one in five respondents (20%) disagreeing that they understand how to go about this activity.

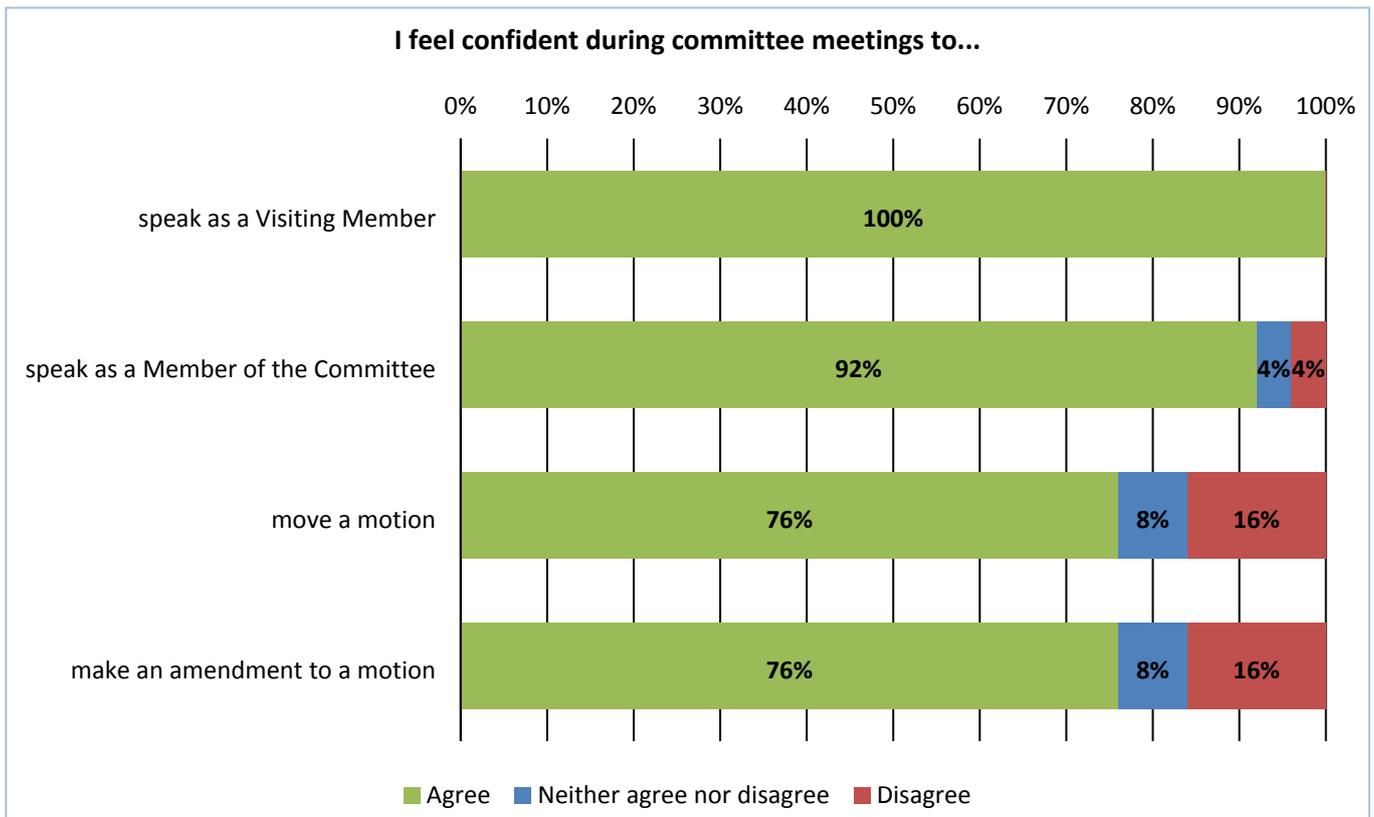
Four of five respondents said they understand how to place an item on a Committee agenda. This activity had the second greatest proportion responding disagree at 16%.

There appears to be the most uncertainty around how to submit a motion to full Council, this activity had the greatest proportion responding neither agree nor disagree at 12%.

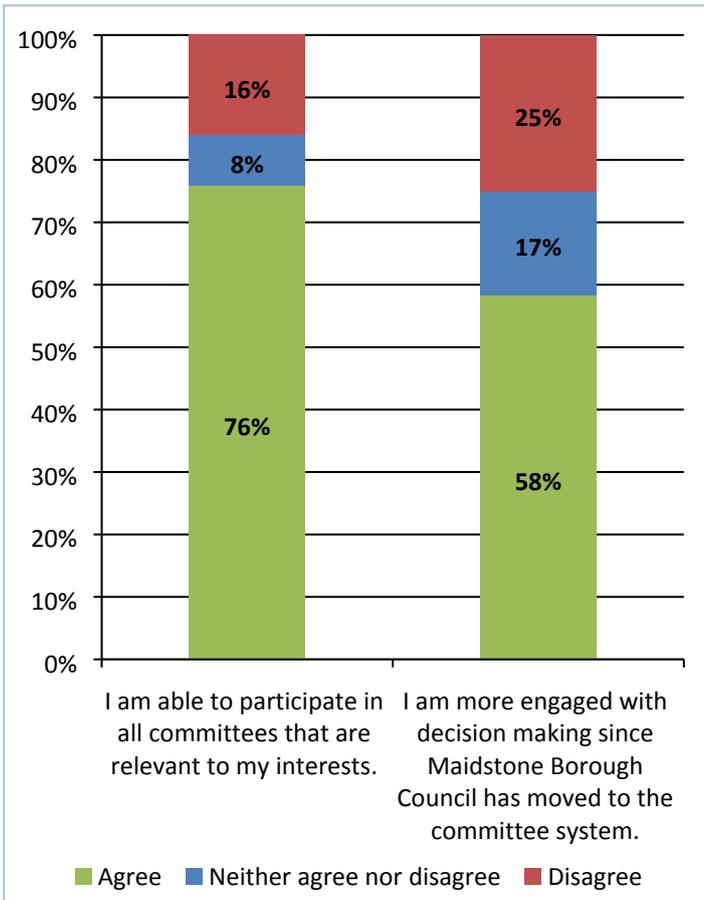
There was no question asking Councillors the length of time they have been a member therefore we cannot assess if it was mostly new members who were didn't know or were uncertain about process for the activities listed.

Members were also asked how confident they feel about undertaking certain activities in a meeting. The chart below shows confidence is high when speaking as a visiting member –aligning with understanding in the previous question.

Although a high proportion of Members said they understand how to move a motion and how to make an amendment to a motion they are slightly less confident when it comes to actually doing the activity within a meeting.



Participation & Engagement



Members were asked if they agree or disagree with the statement 'I am able to participate in all the committees that are relevant to my interests, all 25 members respondents answered this question.

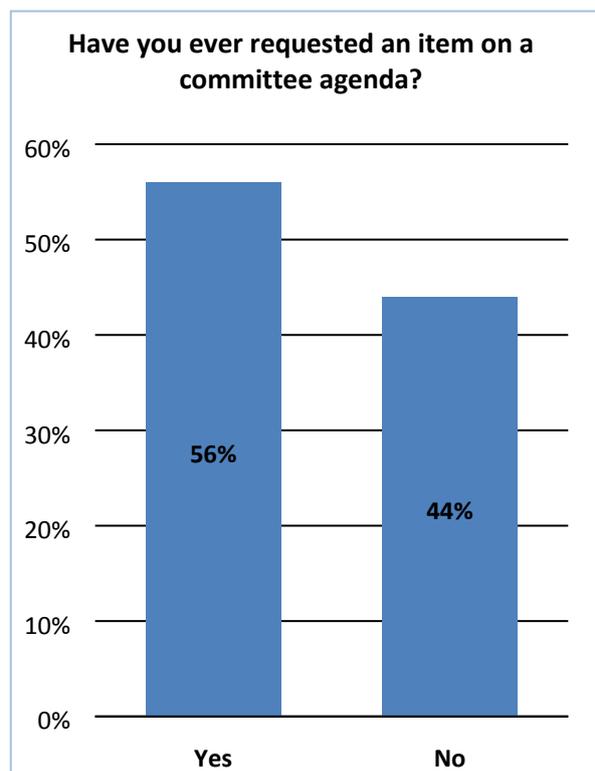
More than three out four respondents agreed that they are able to participate in committees relevant to their interests. Of the 16% that disagreed three of the four members strongly disagreed.

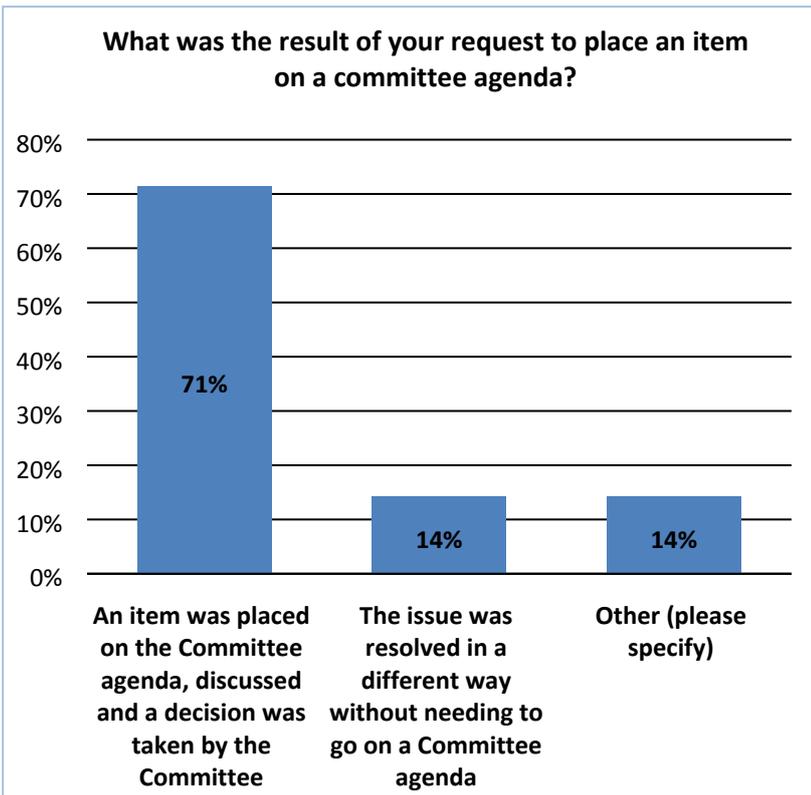
Members were also asked if they feel more engaged since the Council moved to the committee system. The majority of members were still positive but to a lesser degree with 58% agreeing. One in four respondents said they disagreed, this was evenly split between strong disagree and agree.

Requesting Agenda Items

Members were asked if they had ever requested and item on a committee agenda: the majority of respondents (56%) said they had.

Those that responded they had, were asked supplementary questions about which item and what happened as a result of their request. Eleven of the fourteen respondents who answered yes provided the subject of items they had previously requested. Items mentioned included the Community Toilet Scheme, the Business Terrace and several transport related items.





When asked the result of their request the majority of respondents said that as a result of their request the item was placed on the relevant Committee agenda, discussed and a decision taken by the Committee.

There was a fourth answer option of 'The issue was not resolved and didn't make it onto a committee agenda' which positively, no-one selected.

There were two respondents that answered 'other' both of these responses are shown below. In the case of the second one, it is believed that A refers to item placed on the agenda, B refers to

resolved a different way and C refers to issue was not resolved as this is the order in which the answer options were presented.

There are times when items are not allowed to agenda by CLT. Ultimately under the ruling of the Proper Officer. This is why I say the system is ultimately Officer lead.
Both A and C depending on the issues. I have not had a case of B although some matters are still under discussion, including some land transfers.

Members that said they had not requested any agenda items, were asked if there was anything that had prevented them from doing so.

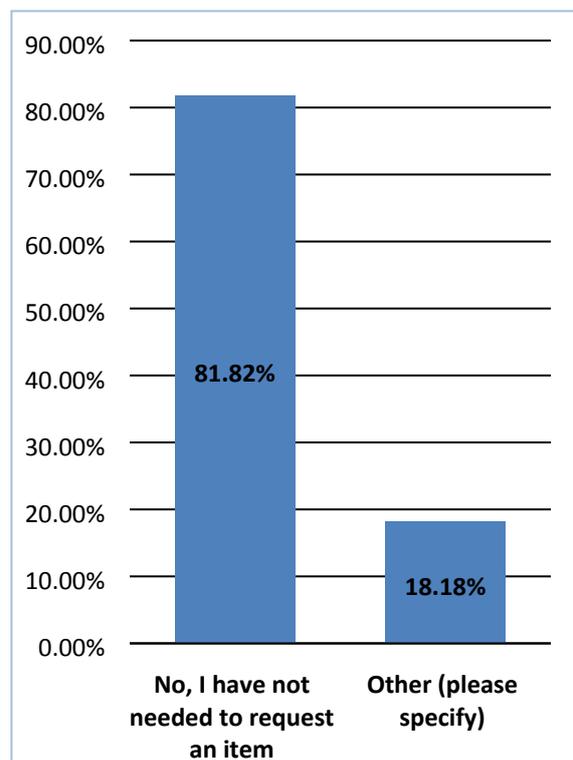
More than four out of five members said they had not needed to request an agenda item.

No members selected any of the following options:

- I was not aware of this provision in the Constitution
- I have requested items before and nothing has happened
- I do not feel confident in speaking to a Committee on an item I have requested

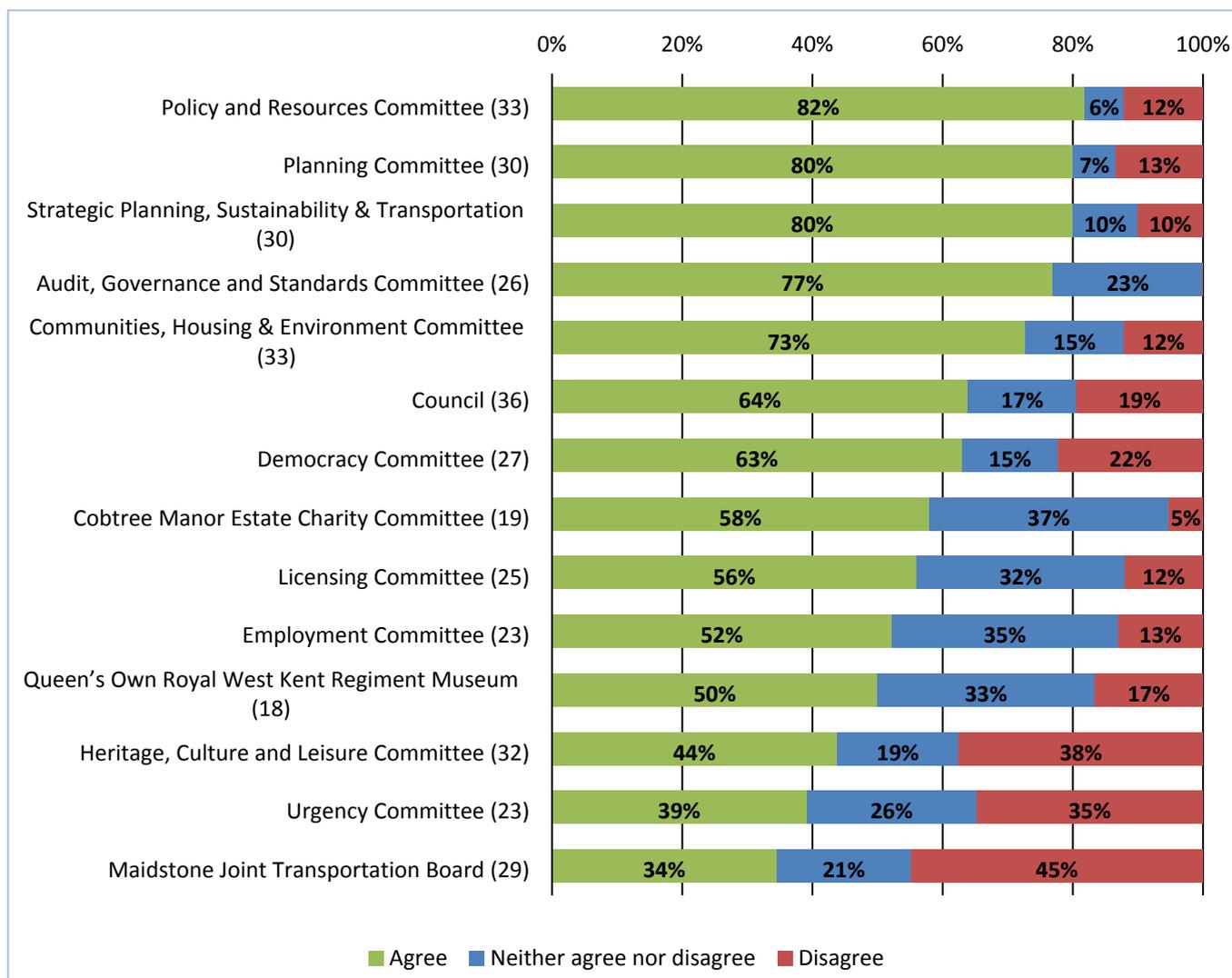
There were two are responses under other. These are shown below:

Chairs are to political
New member. Give me time...



Committee Leadership

All survey respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree, that there is a good combination of experience and skills in committee membership for each of the current committees. Respondents were also given the option responding 'Don't know'. The total respondent numbers to each committee are shown in brackets.



More than three out four respondents were positive about the leadership and skills for Policy & Resources, Planning and Strategic Planning, Sustainability and transportation committees.

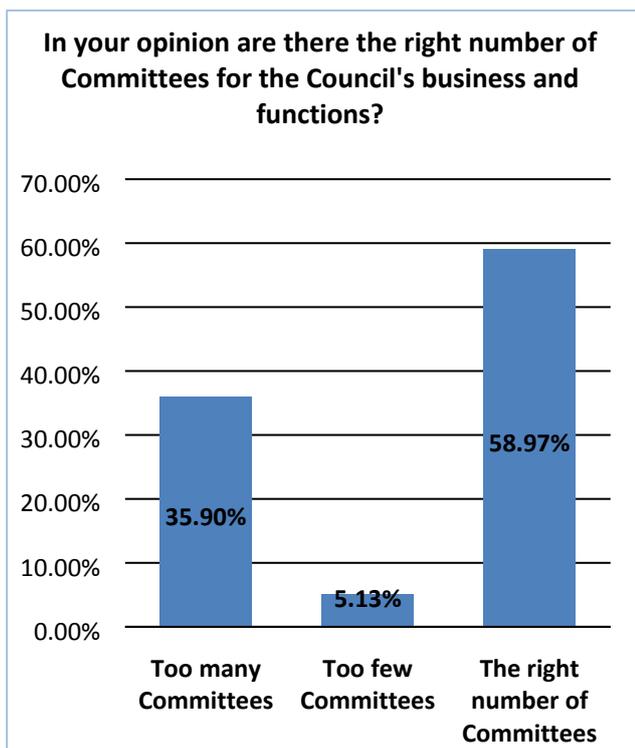
The Committee Manor Estate Charity Committee had the greatest proportion of respondents saying they were unsure at 37% but it also had the lowest number of respondents with more than half opting out of this question with a 'Don't know' response.

Just under a quarter of respondents said they were uncertain about the leadership and skills on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

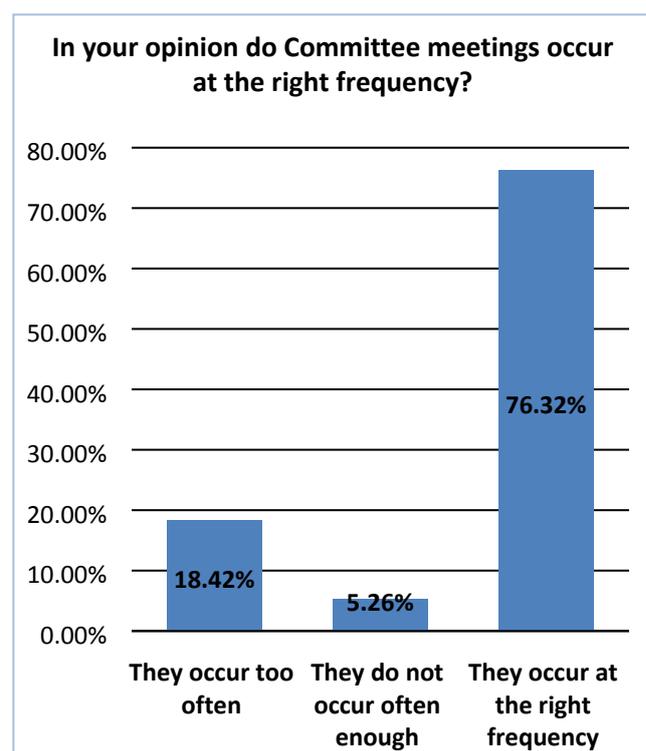
Due to a significant number of officers answering don't know to this question, there are only three Committees where the response levels between members and officers can be analysed (where there

are ten or more respondents to a question). These were Council, Communities, Housing and Environment Committee and Policy and Resources Committee. There were no significant differences in responses level between members and officers for Council or Communities, Housing and Environment Committee. For the Policy and Resources Committee the data shows that Officers were more likely to agree that leadership and skills for this committee are good with 90% agreeing compared to 78% of members responding the same way.

Committee Logistics



All survey respondents were asked if they thought



the current number of committees was correct in order for the Council to carry out its functions and if they felt the current frequency of meetings was right.

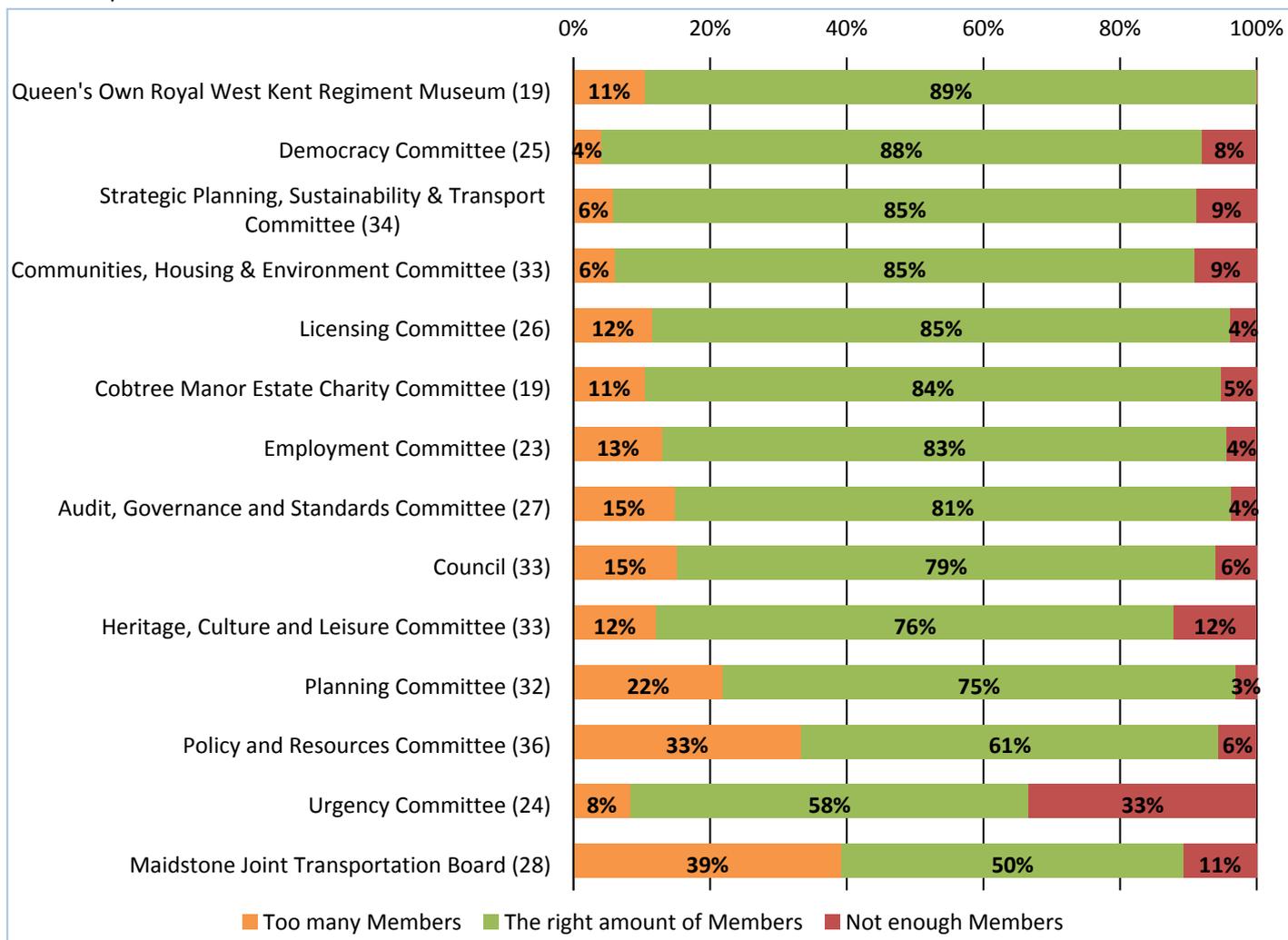
While the majority of respondents said currently there is the right number of committees and that meeting occur at the right frequency, more than a third of respondents said there are too many committees and almost one in five said meetings occur too often.

However, when the data is assessed by respondent type it shows polarising views with majority of officers (57.1%) said there were too many while the majority of members (68.0%) said that the current number of committees was right. While the majority of both groups said that meetings occur at the right frequency officers were more likely to say meeting are too often than members with 35% answering this way compared to 8.3% of members. There were no officer respondents that said there were not enough committees or that meeting do not occur often enough.

Committee Membership

Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis

All survey respondents were asked if they thought there was the right number of members on each of the current committees. Respondents were also given the option responding 'Don't know', total respondent numbers to each committee are shown in brackets.



For more than half of the Committees, more than four in five respondents said they thought the number of members on the Committee was about right.

The Committees that were in the bottom three for leadership all also have less than four in five responding stating that the Committee has the right amount of members.

The Queen's Own Royal West Committee had the greatest proportion of respondents saying this committee had the right amount of members at 89% but it also had one of the lowest number of respondents with just over half opting out of this question with a 'Don't know' response. However, there were no respondents that said this Committee did not have enough members.

The Joint Transportation Board had the lowest proportion saying that the amount of members is right at 50% and the greatest proportion saying that this committee has too many members at 39%. This committee also had the greatest proportion disagreeing that this committee has good leadership and skills.

The Urgency Committee had the greatest proportion of respondents with a third saying there are not enough members on this committee.

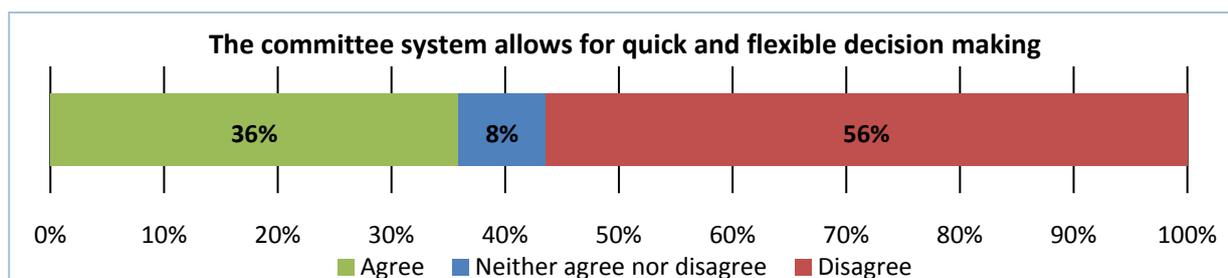
Due to a significant 'don't know' response from Officers there are just three Committees where the response levels between Members and Officers can be analysed (where there are ten or more respondents to a question), Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, Heritage, Leisure and Culture Committee and Planning Committee.

For both the Communities, Housing and the Environment and the Policy and Resources Committees there were no responses from Officers saying there are too few members on these Committees, compared to levels of 13% and 8.3%, respectively for members.

A majority of officers (58.3%) said there were too many members in the Policy & Resources Committee while the majority of members (71%) said there was the right amount of members.

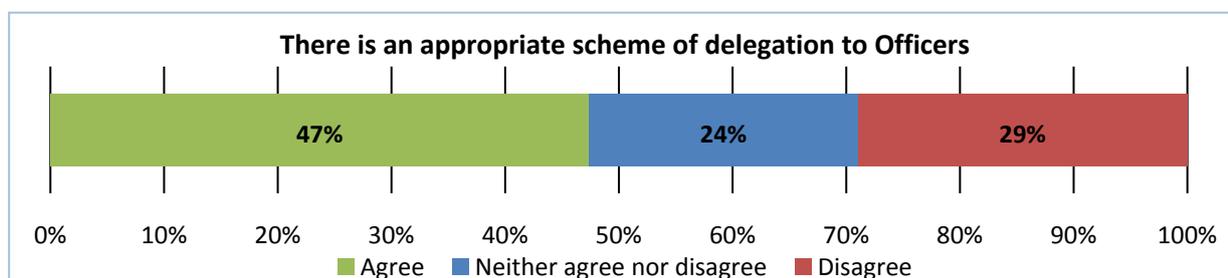
Committee Administration

All respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with a series of statements about elements of the Committee System.



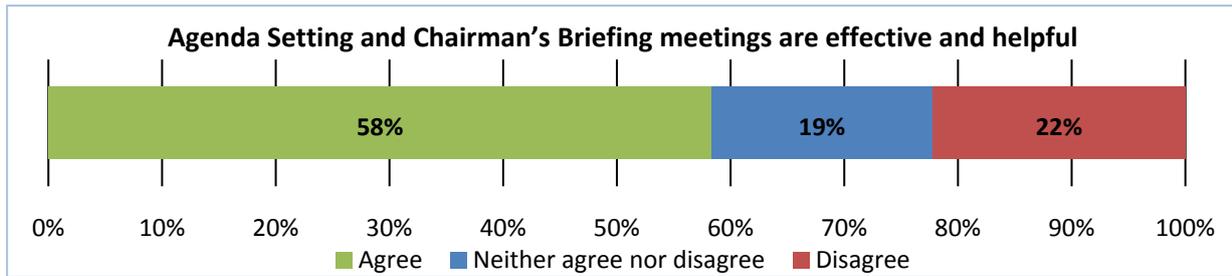
More than half of respondents disagreed that the Committee System allows for quick and flexible decision making. A total of 39 people answered this question.

Looking at the respondent type there are significant differences with Officers more likely to disagree with 86% answering this way compared to 40% of Members. Just 7% of officers agreed that the current committee system allows for quick and flexible decision making compared to 52% of members. Reasons for these polarised views is an area for potential investigation.

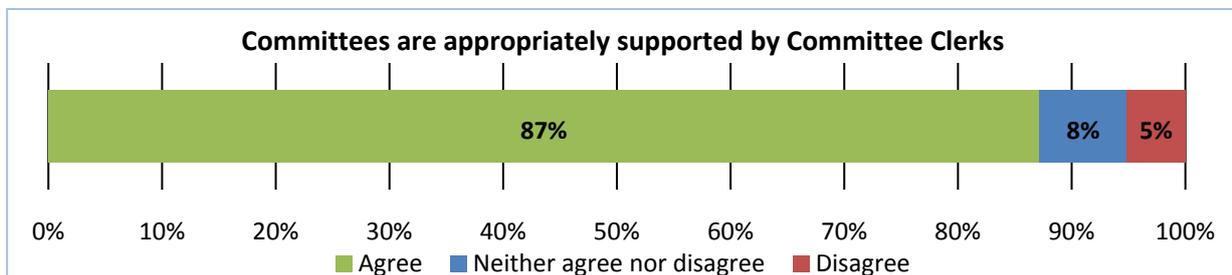


Less than half of respondents agreed that the current scheme of delegation to officers was appropriate. A total of 38 people answered this question. There were no significant difference in the response levels between officers and members.

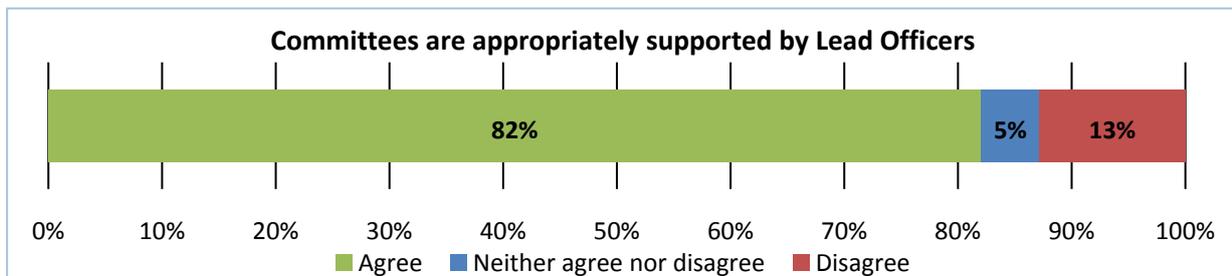
Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis



More than half of respondents agreed that agenda setting and Chairman's briefing meetings are effective and helpful. A total of 36 people answered this question. Members were slightly more likely to agree at 61% compared to 54% of Officers. Just under a third (31%) of officers disagreed compared to 13% of members. Further investigation could show if there are issues with any committees in particular.

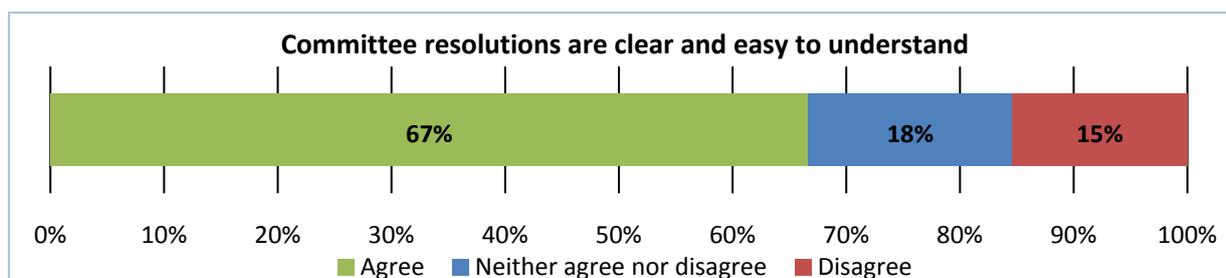


More than four out of five respondents agreed that Committees are appropriately supported by Committee clerks. A total of 39 people responded to this question. Agreement was higher amongst Member respondents than Officer respondents at 92% compared to 79%. No Members responded disagree to this question.



More than four out of five respondents agreed that Committees are appropriately supported by lead officers, this matches the result for both Members and Officers. A total of 39 people responded to this question.

The response to this and the previous questions suggests both Members and Officers are generally satisfied with the committee support provided by committee clerks and lead officers



Two thirds of respondents agreed that Committee resolutions are clear and easy to understand. A total of 39 respondents answered this question. Officers were slightly more likely to respond neither agree nor disagree with 21% responding this way compared to 16% of Members however this difference is not thought to be significant with the proportion agreeing with this statement from each group broadly the same.

All respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comment about Committee membership and management, 16 respondent made comment.

There were two comments that were positive about the current committee system saying that it is effective and that reports have improved over the last year and one respondent was positive with the support given by Committee Clerks.

There were six comments that have been classed as negative. The issues cited were; that it doesn't allow quick and effective decision making, that it can be a barrier to partnership working and that there are too many attendees (both Cllrs and Officers). One commenter said that senior officers see committees as 'rubber stamping' for their ideas, and one person said that they would have given a different answer when asked about committee frequency if they had been asked the same question for each individual committee.

There were four general comments that were neither positive nor negative about the current system. One respondent said there was a difference in quality of legal advice between committees and some committees operate well and other not so believing this to be due to member experience. Two people made comment about committee membership with one stating larger numbers would allow smaller groups to be better represented and the other saying committees should not have even numbers and that the rule about Licensing and Planning Committee membership overlapping was not rational. Respondents also commented that HCL has a small workload, that there is not an obvious committee that was the home for economic business and that there is confusion when services fall across two or more committee remits.

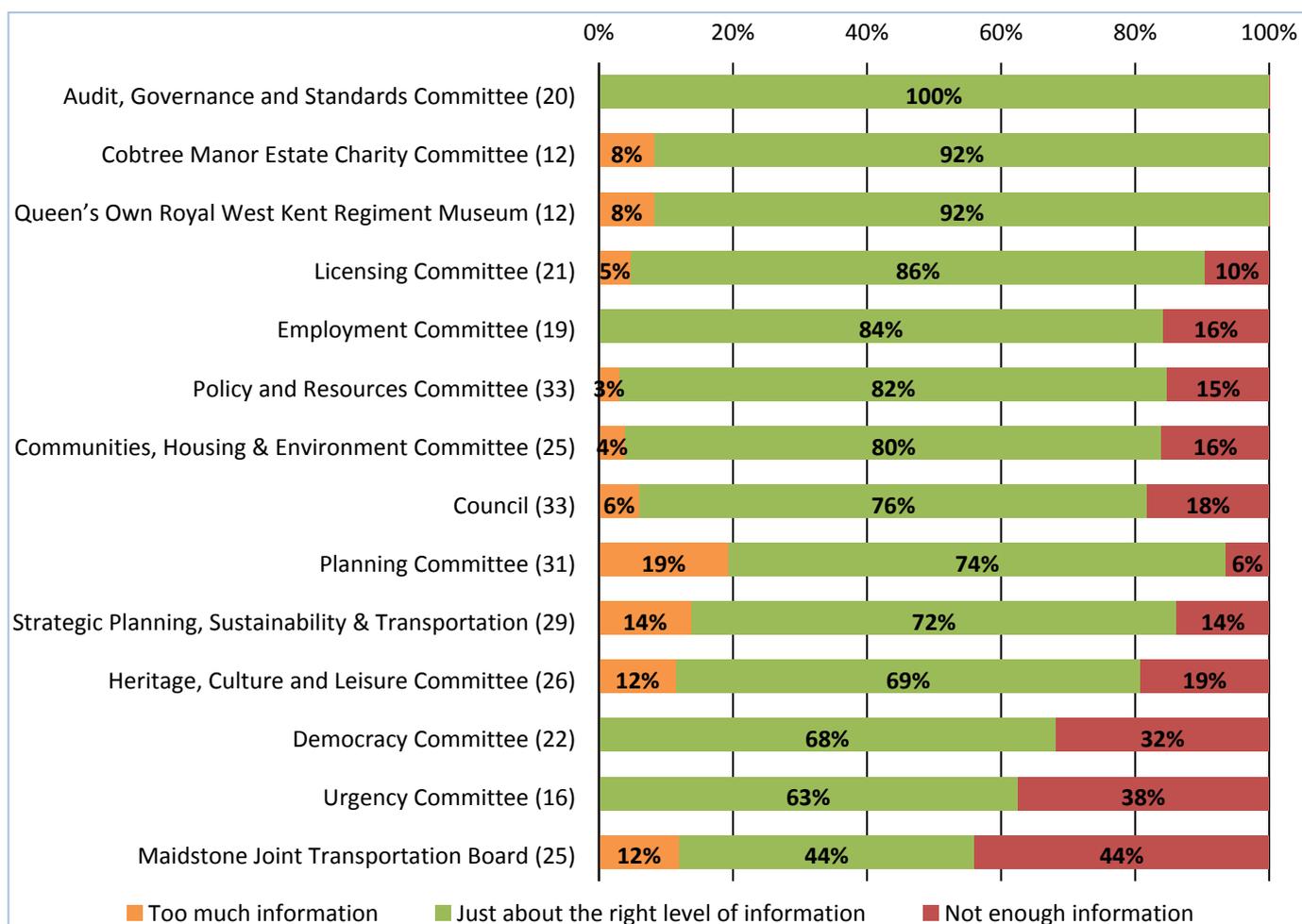
There were five comments classified as containing a suggestion. These included limiting committee membership to nine members and power of delegation for chairs and vice chairs for decision making on issues that do not come to committee, with this respondent stating that delegated officers were often unwilling to use theirs. There was also a conflicting suggestion that some committees get involved in too much detail and a lack of pragmatism for cross-committee working. Delegation of powers was an area in an earlier question where no consensus exists between members and officers.

There was one respondent that suggested there should be an additional committee to look at transport infrastructure, stating that the JTB is ineffective.

There was a respondent that said not all the relevant officers understand committee procedure and could benefit from training. While there was no question in the survey for officer about how confident they feel with committee procedure this could be an element worth exploring further with officers.

Information for Decision Making

All respondents were asked, for each committee, if they thought report contained the right amount of advice and information to facilitate decision making. For many committees a significant proportion of respondents answered 'I don't know', the total respondents for each question component is shown in brackets in the chart below.



For half of the committees more than four in five respondents said that reports contained enough information for decision making.

The Joint Transportation Board had less than half of respondents agreeing that its report provide enough information. This committee also had the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing that this committee has a good combination of skills and experience and the lowest proportion agreeing that this committee had the correct number of members.

The Urgency Committee had the second lowest proportion of respondents saying reports contained just the right amount of information. Like the Joint Transportation Board the position of committee has not changed compared to previous questions, with the second lowest proportions agreeing that

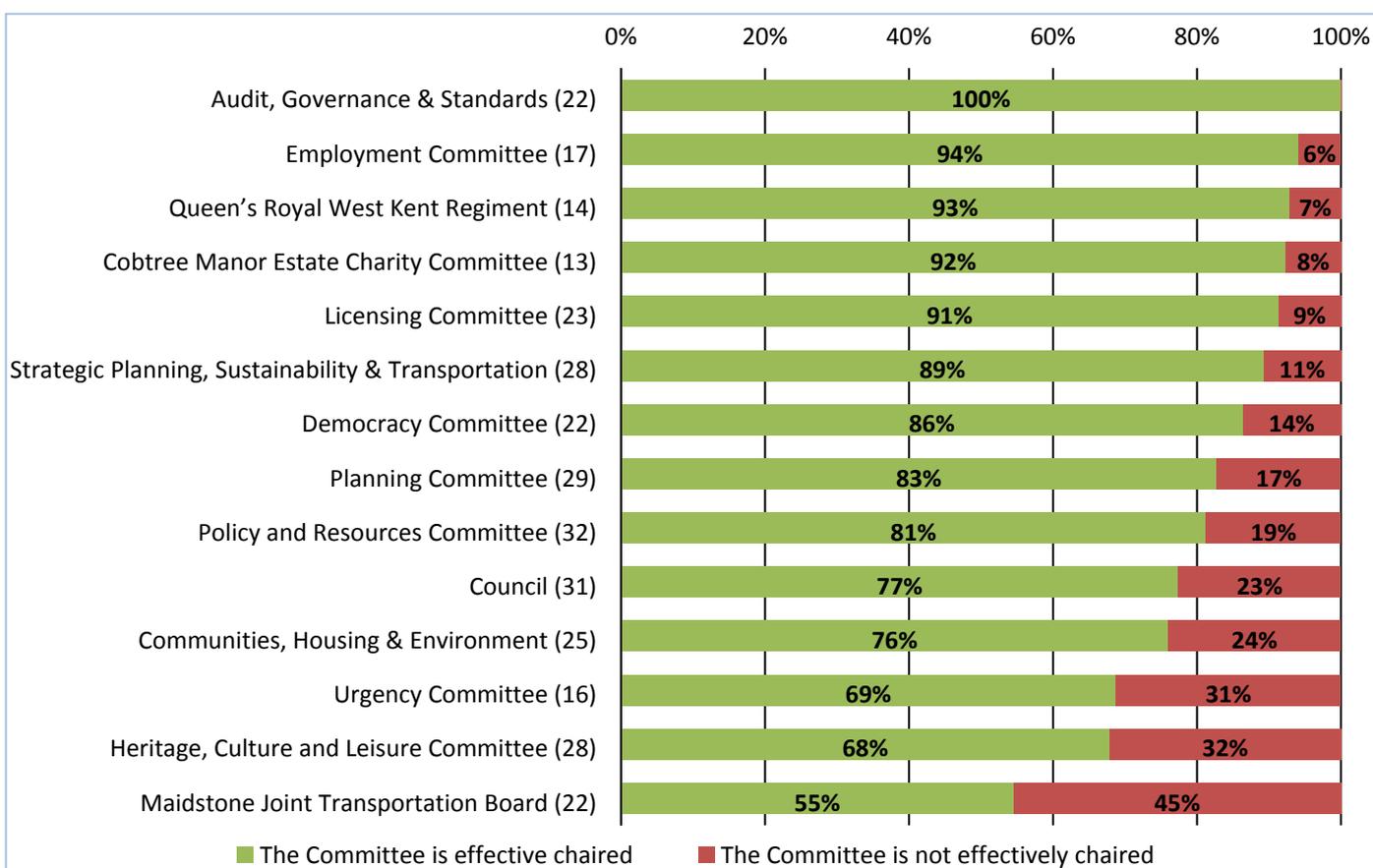
the leadership and experience on this committee is good and that this committee has the right number of councillors.

Only Policy and Resources Committee had enough officer responses to compare response levels with that of Members. Members were slightly more positive than officers with 86% saying that reports had just the right level of information compared to 73% of Officers.

Looking at the results for Members in isolation, of the committees with more than ten respondents, the Heritage, Culture and Leisure committee had the greatest proportion responding, too much information with 11% responding this way. More than four in five member respondents said there was just the right amount of information in reports for the Employment committee, Licensing Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee. At the other end of scale more than four in ten respondents that there was not enough information in reports for the Joint Transportation Committee or the Urgency Committee.

Chairmanship

All respondents were asked, for each committee, if they considered it to be effectively chaired. For many committees a significant proportion of respondents answered 'I don't know', the total respondents for each question component is shown in brackets in the chart below.



For the majority of committees more than three out four respondents felt they were effectively chaired. The Joint Transportation board featured at the bottom of the list and the Urgency Committee remains in the bottom three, as with all previous question about specific committees.

Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis

There was no component of this question where there were enough officer respondents to compare response levels with that of members.

Looking at the results to this question for members only the top three committees for effective chairing are the same as in the overall result. However, there are some differences in the bottom three compared to the overall result; Urgency Committee is bottom with 58% responding that this committee is effectively chaired and the joint Transportation Board is second bottom with 65% saying it is effectively chaired and Communities, Housing and the Environment is third bottom of members with 72% saying it is effectively chaired.

All respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comment about the decision making processing and committee chairing, 14 respondents gave comments.

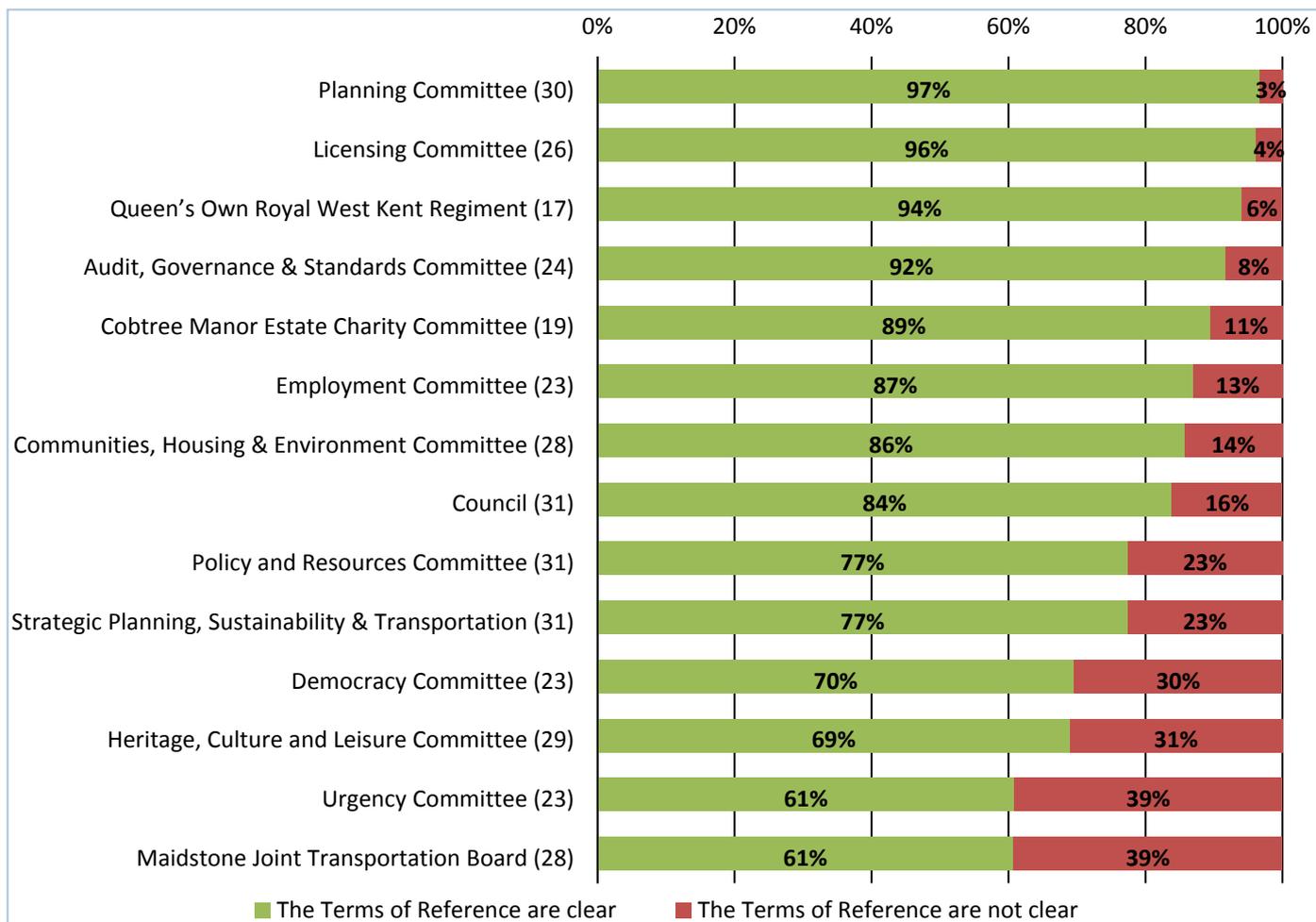
One said they had limited experience and another stated they could only answer on people they know. There were four comments that suggested that it comes down to individual personalities, with one saying it depends on their skills, another stating that it shouldn't be a political role and one that some have their own agenda. There was also one person that said, in their experience chairs could benefit from clearer procedural advice. One person said the current system of not allowing chairs and vice-chairs to be same political group make succession planning difficult.

There were two people that mentioned the process for allowing members to speak at meetings, with one stating a preference for order by indication and another said the method for indicating to the chair that you wish to speak should be consistent from committee to committee.

There was one person who comments that meetings can be repetitive which adds to the length of meetings and another said they would like more information about the risks and implications when making decisions.

Terms of Reference

All survey respondents were asked if they thought the terms of reference, for each committee, were clear, there was a significant proportion of respondent that said 'I don't know', therefore the total number of respondents for each question component is shown in brackets in the chart below.

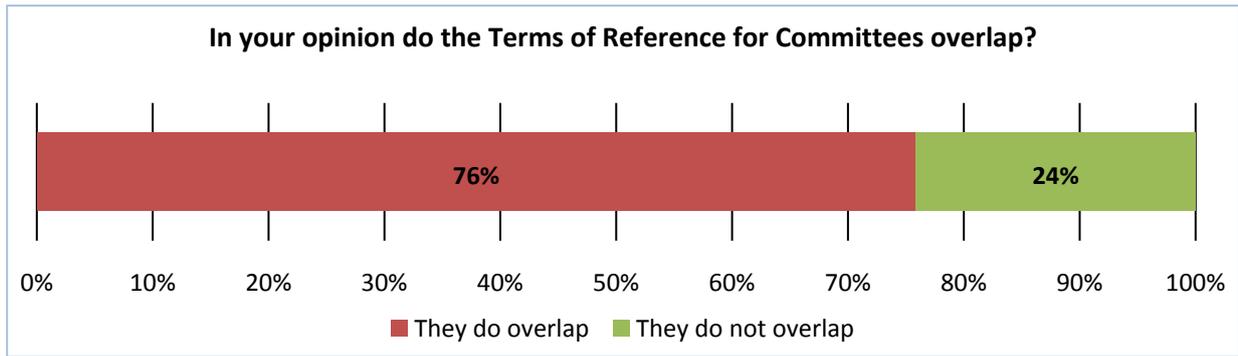


For the majority of committees more than four out five respondents said that the terms of reference was clear, with the Planning Committee coming out top with 97% of respondents stating the terms of reference for this committee are clear. As with previous question Joint Transportation Board and the Urgency Committee are bottom with almost four in ten respondents stating terms of reference are unclear.

There was no component of this question where there were enough officer respondents to compare response levels with that of members.

When assessing the responses from members in isolation, the pattern is similar for all respondents, the Urgency Committee however comes lowest at 56%, followed by the Joint Transportation Board and Heritage, Culture and Leisure which both had 68% of member's respondents agreeing that terms of reference are clear.

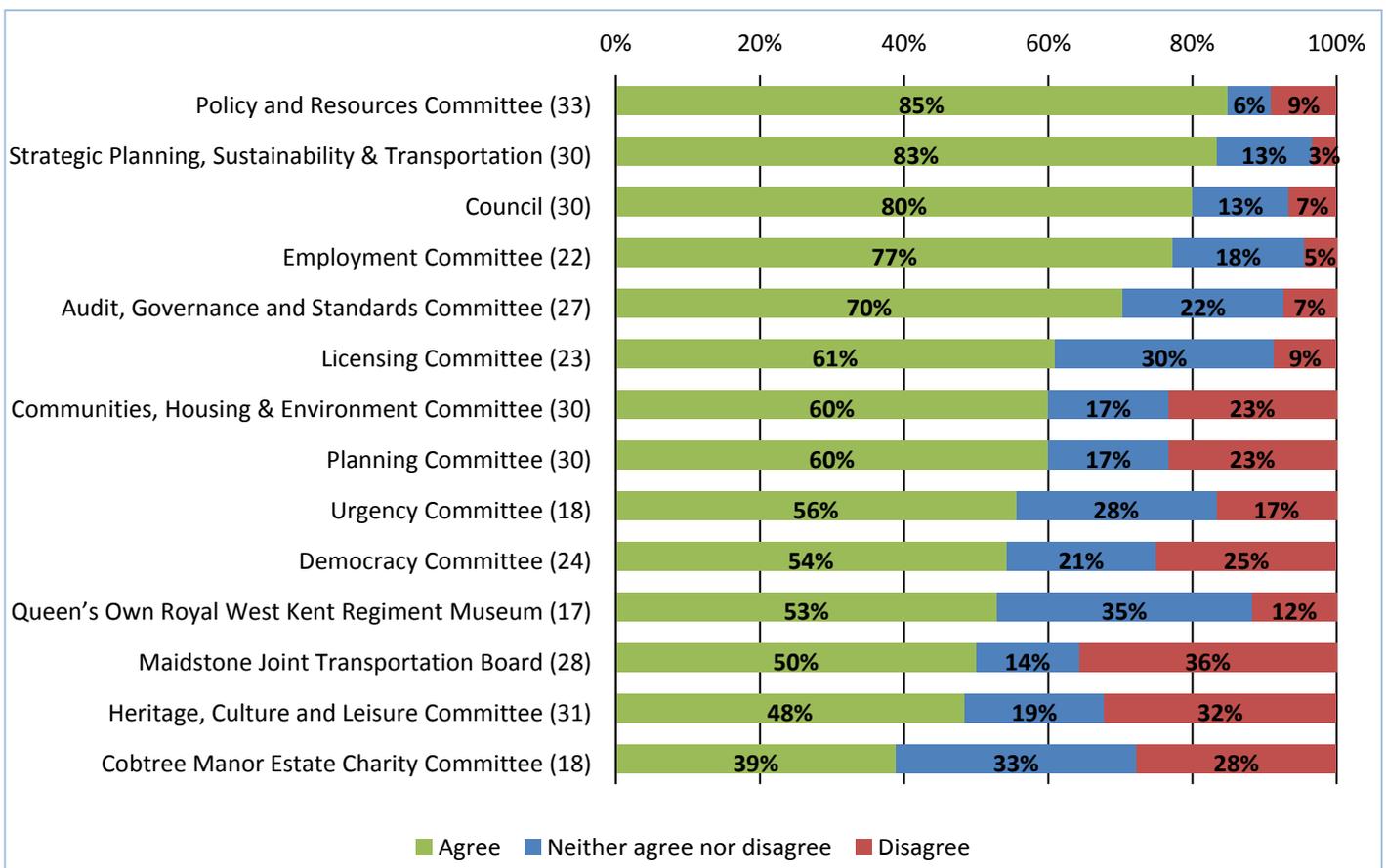
Respondents were also asked if they felt that the terms of reference for committee overlapped, eight people responded 'I don't know' leaving 29 respondents providing an opinion.



The majority of respondents felt that there is overlap in the terms of reference between committees. There were not enough responses from officers to compare differences in opinion between members and officers but the results for both members and officers were in line with the overall result.

Strategic Value

All survey respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that each committee focuses on the strategic direction of the organisation and does not become involved in operational business, there was a significant proportion of respondents that said 'I don't know', therefore the total number of respondents for each question component is shown in brackets in the chart below.



There were three committees where more than four out of five respondents said the committee does not become involved in operational business; The Policy & resources, Strategic Planning & Transportation and Planning Committees.

Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis

The Queen's Own Royal Regiment Trust Museum Committee had the greatest proportion of respondents who do not provide an opinion either way with over a third of respondents answering this way. However, more than half of respondents (19) responded 'I don't know' giving this committee the lowest number of respondents.

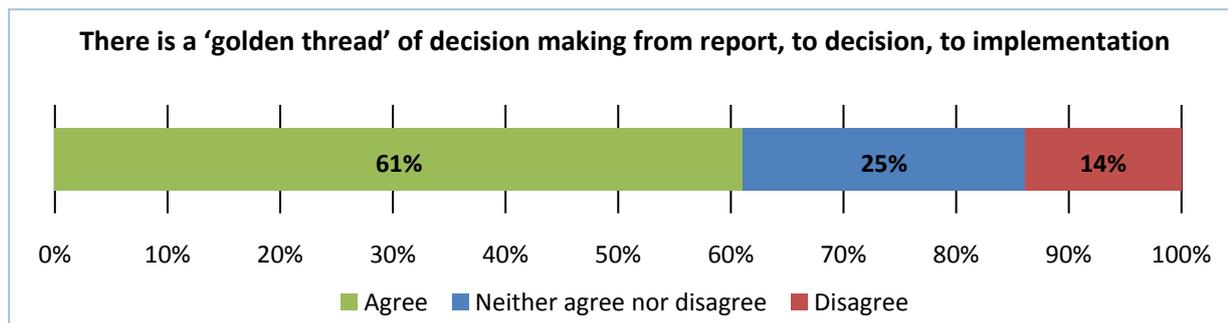
Although the Joint Transportation Board had the greatest proportion disagreeing that the committee focuses on the strategic direction of the organisation at 36%, the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee and the Urgency Committee had greater proportions responding 'neither agree nor disagree' and lower proportions agreeing.

There was no committee where there were enough officer respondents to compare response levels with that of members. Members results in isolation show the Strategic Planning & Transportation Committee having the greatest proportion agreeing at 91%, the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee had the greatest proportion of members responding 'neither agree nor disagree' at 38% (they also had the lowest proportion agreeing at 38%) and the Joint Transportation Board had the greatest proportion of members responding disagree at 27%.

All survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comment about terms of reference and the strategic direction of committees. Nine respondents made comment, these are set out in full below:

Responses
I would like to see all as much notice through the work programs of items coming to the committee. At SPST the Sept Article 4 item was not on the work program leading up to the meeting and therefore I feel an important decision was made by 9 members having 1 weeks notice through papers
Councillor's need more input into agenda setting
some committees eg employment do have a type of operational involvement eg senior recruitment. Overlap of TOR can cause difficulties and I do not think we currently have suitable protocols to deal with this. A solution is perhaps joint sub committees but I think this fails the objective of being cost neutral as set out above.
I do find that there is a tendency to ping pong some issues between committees. For example, the playing fields strategy. There is also a tendency to ask for briefings for a wider group of councillors when sometimes the committee ought to simply carry out its delegated function.
I am concerned that the email accompanying this survey says members should have greater role in decision making when they already have a greater role in operational matters that is strictly in their remit. Strategic decisions are already made by them but they seem to view officer advice as interference even though officers are experienced professionals
Some committees are much less strategic in the reports they receive and the questions put forward by those who sit on them
All and every committee needs looking at for big changes needed
By definition the West Kent and Cobtree Committees are required to discuss operational matters. Likewise the regulatory committees have to do so. The question should probably be put differently for these bodies. Secondly I suspect members views of what is operational are not the same as those of the Senior Officers, and the writer of this question.
It is not always the committee that gets too involved in operational issues but individual Members.

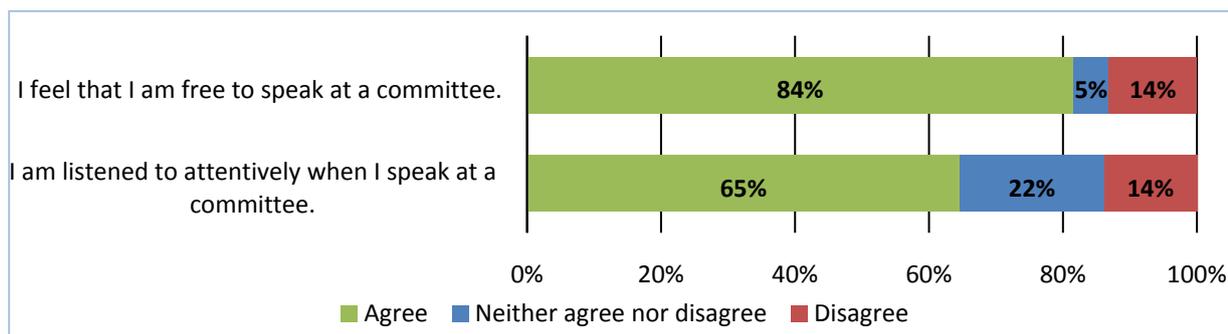
All respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that ‘There is a ‘golden thread’ of decision making from report, to decision’, a total of 36 people responded.



Overall, just over six in ten respondents agreed there is a ‘golden thread’, while a quarter gave no strong opinion either way. When comparing the response levels between officers and members the data shows that officers were less likely to disagree (with no officers responding this way) and more likely to have no strong opinion with a third of officers answering this way compared to a fifth of members.

Speaking & Listening At Meetings

Both Members and Officers were asked about how they felt about speaking in committee and if they feel they are listened to, a total of 37 respondents answered.



More than four out of five respondents said they feel like they can speak freely at committee. A slightly greater proportion of members agreed compared to officers at 88% compared to 75%.

Overall, 65% of respondents said they are listened to when speaking at committee. There were no real difference in the response levels between members and officers however there was one member respondent that strongly disagreed with the statement and there were no officers responding this way. One in five respondents gave no strong opinion either way; this could indicate that they don't regularly attend committee or speakers that are less 'heard' than others.

Improving the Committee System

All respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments about how they feel the committee system could be improved, 17 comments were received.

Appendix 3 - Committee Structure Review Survey Analysis

There were two comments that were broadly positive about the current committee system stating they are a good forum for member views and that there has been increased involvement from members and that it has proved to be a fairer system.

There were five comments that were negative about the current system stating that it should be abolished, that we should go back to the cabinet model and that it over represents minority parties.

Three comments have been classed as general with respondents stating they tend to get their voice heard, querying if people listen when others speak and stating more focus on strategic decisions.

Seven comments have been identified as containing a suggestion these are listed in full below.

Responses
Less committees, or reduced frequency of meetings.
bring the tables closer together to encourage participation. I can't always see who's talking because they are in a straight line There's too big a gap between the two sides
Substitutes and visiting members should be made to read reports in advance. So much time is wasted answering questions or bringing people up to date when one member can't attend.
Shorter officer introductions to reports - members should have read them in advance and therefore do not need to rely on a full recap of the contents.
Rethink agendas
Democracy Committee is probably superfluous and could have its role re-allocated. The JTB is pointless and probably should be abolished. The prohibition on SPST's Plans Sub-Committee being formed needs re-considering.
Get more Members to attend briefing sessions on key projects and try to keep some continuation with committee members year on year so they can build knowledge.

Interview Summary

Interview Schedule

Day One	15 November 2018
Day Two	22 November 2018
Day Three	29 November 2018

Interview Panel

Interview Panel Members	Councillor Fran Wilson
	Councillor Fay Gooch
	Councillor John Perry
	Councillor Marion Ring
	Councillor Denise Joy
Interview Panel Substitute Members	Councillor Steve McLoughlin
	Councillor Clive English

Interviewee Summary

Members Interviewed	17
Officers Interviewed	7

Interview Questions

Q1	Are there any ways that the Committee system could be improved at Maidstone?
Q2	Are there any ways that decision making processes could be adjusted to improve the speed and efficiency of the system?
Q3	Are there any ways that reports could be presented differently to Committees to enhance the decision making process?
Q4	What is your view on the decommissioning of the Democracy Committee and allocating its functions to other Committees? What are your reasons for this?
Q5	What is your view on the inclusion of "economic development" in the remit of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee? What are your reasons for this?
Q6	Do you have any other comments about the balance of committee responsibilities?
Q7	What is the best way to avoid duplication of work across Committees?
Q8	How clearly do you understand Committee procedures?
Q9	What training could be provided to assist you in your role at Committee?
Q10	Do you have any other comments about the Committee system in Maidstone?
Supplementary questions were asked by the interview panel as appropriate.	

Theme	Comments
Committee Structures	<p>Structure options could be based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4 Objectives in the new Strategic Plan • The key services provided by Maidstone Borough Council • The responsibilities of the Heads of Service • Grouping similar skillsets/interests • The creation of a separate Economic Development Committee, with service committees shaped around this • Whole-system suggestions provided by Councillors as feedback <p>Key considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting the overall number of committees • Clarity of Terms of Reference (ToRs) • Equality of status and workload for all service committees • How CLT and JTB interact with the structures • Inclusion of functions currently within the remit of the Democracy Committee, Employment Committee and Urgency Committee • Inclusion of a committee with a focus on the ‘internal workings’ of the Council, potentially as a General Purposes Group • The use of Joint-Committees and Sub-Committees • Promotion/Inclusion of a Scrutiny function • Committee membership size • Frequency of committee meetings • Political balance of all committees
Committee Mechanics	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that ToRs clearly state the remit of each Committee • Clarifying which Committee is the ‘final decision maker’ for various topics • Emphasis on a Committee’s function to provide clear direction to Officers through resolutions • Clear process and requirement for references between committees • Clear process and requirements for securing funding from the Policy and Resources Committee • Clear process and requirements for Extraordinary Committee meetings • Adapting Committee remits to reduce/remove the inclusion of items for noting <p>Cross-Committee Working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agreed process for ensuring that topics spanning more than one Committee are decided in an efficient manner and do not require discussion at both Committees • Promotion of guest speakers, both internally and externally, to enhance understanding of topics

	<p>Procedure Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion/Clarification of the agenda item request functionality • Creation of a process to ensure that agenda item requests are traceable • Development of a process for Urgent Updates so Members have time to consider these in advance of Committee meetings • Potential inclusion of Visiting Members during a debate, rather than limiting contributions to the beginning of the item • Committee Members should, where possible, construct potential motions fully prior to debate • Clarity around the process and possible uses of adjournment and deferment • Front-loading agendas with noting items to ensure these are covered promptly and there is adequate time for debate on decision items • How to effectively resolve a procedural issue at committee <p>Agenda Publication and Distribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that both electronic and paper agenda packs are available in good time – perhaps through tweaks to postage and courier run arrangements • Reinforcing the expectation that reports are to be read ahead of Committee, once distribution of paper copies is assessed • Encouraging Members to raise queries with Officers ahead of a Committee meeting so that a comprehensive answer can be provided for all Committee attendees
<p>Maidstone Borough Council Constitution</p>	<p>Development to the Constitution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing duplication and inconsistencies in the content • A gap analysis of the current content • Creating a consistent page numbering system <p>Delegated Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity regarding the scope and implementation of decisions that are made using delegated authority <p>Key considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the Constitution is ‘reader friendly’
<p>Committee Chairmanship</p>	<p>Appointment of Chairmen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Chairman needs to be trusted by the whole committee, and should therefore be appointed on ‘who is the best person for the job’ • Chairmanship should be universally understood as a facilitation role, and not perceived as a Cabinet Member position • All members should be encouraged to consider being a Chairman to develop a breadth of potential candidates

	<p>Involvement in the Report Cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that Chairmen and Vice-Chairman are kept informed of the direction of reports throughout the report writing process • Clarifying the responsibility of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen with regards to ensuring reports are suitable for Committee, recommendations are appropriate and relevant options have been fully explored • Quarterly Chairman Meetings could be increased in frequency, if individual Agenda Setting/Chairman Briefing meetings were stopped <p>Role at Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that debate is constructive and focussed • Providing a consistent approach to the 'order of debate' • Ensuring that items for noting are not excessively debated or discussed • Clarification about the support, advice and guidance provided by Democratic Services or Legal Representative
<p>Committee Reports</p>	<p>Report Structure and Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification of whether a report is for 'noting', 'discussion' or 'decision' on the front page of the report • Colour coding report pages so that 'noting' reports are easily identifiable, in a comparable process to that used for Part 2 pages • Potential re-location of the 'Risks and Cross-Cutting Issues' section • Reworked 'Risks and Cross-Cutting issues' to reflect the new Strategic Plan • A universal approach for completing the 'Risks and Cross Cutting Issues' section of reports • A common approach to appendices, ensuring that reports provide a concise summary of pertinent details • Increased use of visualisations to reduce the word count in reports • Identification/labelling of legislative requirements so Members are fully briefed on these requirements, and do not debate a topic that cannot be changed <p>Presentations at Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity around the requirements for presentations, so that Officers provide a concise summary for the Committee • Pre-recording of presentations to be circulated in advance of meetings, which can be displayed on TV screens at the meeting
<p>Member Briefings</p>	<p>Scope and Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings should be limited to a single complex topic, or should combine multiple topics, to streamline the amount that are arranged • Briefings should be used as an opportunity to discuss key strategic topics and not explore the minutiae of topics

<p>Training</p>	<p>Combined Officer-Member Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Snap Committees as an induction meeting for new Members and Officers • ‘Role Playing’ training for Committee procedures • Public speaking • Adapting recommendations at Committee to form a resolution • Clarity around the roles of the Democratic Services Officer/Legal Support at Committee • A broad introduction to the Council, including functions and how decisions are made • A ‘tour’ of the things that each Committee is responsible for • Promotion of a culture of informal feedback to help with continuous development <p>Officer Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report writing • Report presentations <p>Member Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction - how committees work, committee and report timelines, division of responsibilities of committee members and officers, agenda setting approach, spend and scope of committees, delegated authority • Mentoring/Buddying • Acting as Substitute Members • Procedures – Decision Referral, How to use procedures to get the desired outcome at Committee, • Local Plan • Budgetary training • Key Officer contacts • Chairmanship <p>Written Information/Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct at Committees • Committee Procedures and Key Phrases – such as encouraging Members to say ‘I move that...’ • An ‘easy-read’ and concise pack of key information and constitutional guidance for Members
<p>Information Sharing and Participation</p>	<p>Sharing Information with Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing a list of upcoming agenda items via the Weekly Notice of Meetings <p>Promoting Public Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of how agendas and decisions are published to ensure for easy-access • Navigation facility within webcasts to allow viewers to skip to the relevant debate

HCL			
2018/19			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	8	2	6
		25.00%	75.00%
2017/18			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	9	7	2
		77.78%	22.22%
2016/17			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	8	7	1
		87.50%	12.50%
2015/16			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	4	3	1
		75.00%	25.00%

CHE			
2018/19			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	5	4	1
		80.00%	20.00%
2017/18			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	11	9	2
		81.82%	18.18%
2016/17			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	11	11	0
		100.00%	0.00%
2015/16			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	7	4	3
		57.14%	42.86%

SPST			
2018/19			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	7	7	0
		100.00%	0.00%
2017/18			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	19	16	3
		84.21%	15.79%
2016/17			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	27	19	3
		70.37%	11.11%
2015/16			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	7	6	1
		85.71%	14.29%

P&R			
2018/19			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	5	5	0
		100.00%	0.00%
2017/18			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	8	7	1
		87.50%	12.50%
2016/17			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	3	1	2
		33.33%	66.67%
2015/16			
Total	Noted	Changes/Additions	
	3	2	1
		66.67%	33.33%

Average Items for Noting per Year	
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	7.25
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	15
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	8.5
Policy and Resources Committee	4.75