

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE REVIEW – 6 MONTH UPDATE

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Nash, Democratic Services Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 10 April 2019, Council suggested that a report be considered by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee six months after the implementation of new report styles in order to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	13 November 2019

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendation will materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, it will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims, as effective reporting is key to the strategic decision-making processes operated by the Council.	Democratic Services Officer
Cross Cutting Objectives	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer
Risk Management	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer
Financial	No implications.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Staffing	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer
Legal	Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 the Council has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee Structure Review assist in demonstrating compliance with the statutory duty.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no specific privacy or data protection issues to address.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Equalities	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer
Public Health	No implications.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer
Procurement	No implications.	Democratic Services Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 10 April 2019, Council considered the *Report of the Democracy Committee held on 13 March 2019 – Committee Structure Review*. The minutes of the meeting state that:

Note: During consideration of the next agenda item (Report of the Democracy Committee proposing amendments to the terms of reference of the Planning Committee), a Member expressed concern that although he had indicated that he wished to speak on recommendation 10 of the Committee Structure Review report relating to report styles and, in particular, the proposal that the cross-cutting issues and implications section be included at the front of reports, he had not been given the opportunity to speak. The Mayor apologised for his mistake in failing to call upon the Member to speak.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there was no facility for the Council to amend its earlier decision at this meeting, but Members might wish to reflect in due course on the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

As a consequence, an item will be included in the Democracy and General Purposes Committee Work Programme to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements in six months' time.

- 2.2 Following the agreement of the Committee Structure Review report by Council on 10 April 2019, the new report style was introduced for the 2019/20 municipal year.
- 2.3 All Councillors and Wider Leadership Team were asked to provide feedback on the new report template in August 2019. 12 responses were received, although respondents were not required to answer every question.
- 2.4 The questions that Councillors and Officers were asked to respond to were:
1. The relocation of the "Cross Cutting Issues and Implications" section to the front of reports is:
 - i. A positive change
 - ii. Neither a positive nor negative change
 - iii. A negative change
 2. Please explain the reasons for your response to question one
 3. Any other comments

2.5 The following table shows the responses received for Question One:

Response		Number of Responses
i.	A positive change	4
ii.	Neither a positive nor negative change	3
iii.	A negative change	1

2.6 The responses to Question Two have been summarised below:

Positive Comments	Neutral Comments	Negative Comments
This helps to demonstrate how proposals may further corporate objectives and the Strategic Plan.	Members and Officers are expected to fully read reports, so its position is not important.	This confuses reports and encourages the reader the skim read from the outset.
This helps to highlight important factors, such as cost implications.	The difference was not noticeable and did not make a significant difference.	
This helps to provide a preamble to the content of the report, which provides a better awareness of the issues while you read the report and form a view on the topic.		

2.7 Two themes emerged as a result of Question Three:

Theme	Response from Democratic Services
Biodiversity, climate and pollution needed to be considered as part of the cross-cutting issues and implications section.	<p>"Biodiversity and Environmental sustainability is respected" is included under the second row "Cross Cutting Objectives". This wording is taken directly from the new Strategic Plan.</p> <p>If an Officer identifies a consideration during report writing, then this could be explained within this section. Equally, if the report has no relevant implications, then it would be appropriate for the Officer to delete this wording from the table. This may explain why it does not appear in some reports.</p>

The relocation of the cross-cutting issues and implications may be beneficial for members of the public, who could decide whether to read the full report based on the information contained in this section.	N/A
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- 2.8 From the feedback received, most respondents considered the change to be positive or neutral. It is therefore suggested that no further changes are made to the template at present.
- 2.9 Should any changes be required at a later date, this would be an operational matter dealt with by Democratic Services. This would not require prior consideration by a committee, although any feedback provided informally by Councillors and Officers would be taken into account.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could choose to note the report and therefore no further action would be taken.
- 3.2 The Committee could suggest changes to the report style, which would be considered by Democratic Services when the service committee report template is next reviewed. This is not recommended as the feedback received has shown that the new report template has been received largely positively.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 3.1 is the preferred option.
- 4.2 Regardless of the approach that the Committee chooses, the future adjustment of report templates is an operational matter, and it is therefore imperative that changes are implemented by Democratic Services without the expectation that a report is submitted to the Democracy and General Purposes Committee beforehand.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Democracy Committee (decommissioned on 22 April 2019 and replaced by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee) led the Committee Structure Review in 2018/19, which resulted in changes being made to the report styles.

- 6.2 An email was sent to all Councillors and Wider Leadership Team to request feedback on the new reporting template.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If the report is noted, then no further action will be taken.
- 7.2 If adjustments are suggested by the Committee, then Democratic Services will consider these suggestions when the report template is next reviewed.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.