

Governance Review 2023/24

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	

Executive Summary

In March 2023 the Democracy and General Purposes Committee agreed to add a review of the governance arrangements considering the reduction of Members in May 2024, this will constitute reviewing the arrangements for Policy Advisory Committees, Overview and Scrutiny and any consequential changes to the constitution that may be needed.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To review and agree the terms of reference for the review as set out at 3.1; and
2. Agree an approach to conducting a review from the options proposed at 3.2

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes	13 September 2023

Governance Review: Changing to an Executive Model

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Any change to governance arrangements would need to ensure effective decision-making processes are in place to ensure the delivery of the strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance</p>
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Any change to governance arrangements would need to ensure effective decision-making processes are in place to ensure the delivery of the strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance</p>
Risk Management	<p>Already covered in the risk section</p>	<p>Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance</p>
Financial	<p>This review will be conducted without additional expenditure.</p>	<p>Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance</p>
Staffing	<p>The review will be conducted within current staffing levels</p>	<p>Director of Strategy,</p>

		Insight and Governance
Legal	The Council changed its governance model from a Committee System to a Leader and Cabinet Model in 2022. The model introduced includes Policy Advisory Committees to advise the Cabinet prior to decisions being taken and one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The council cannot change the governance model away from executive arrangements, however, the features of the governance arrangements can be reviewed and amended for example the creation and number of Policy Advisory Committees, the number of Members on Committees and the arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny. The Monitoring Officer will advise the Committee on any legal implications arising from the review.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	No impact	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change that will require an equalities impact assessment	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	Governance arrangements must include a Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Procurement	No implications	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 In September 2022 a working group commissioned by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee carried out a review of the constitution considering a variety of issues and in particular a Member and Officer snagging list. The review considered and made changes to:

- Improve consistency throughout the constitution
- Reduce the burden on Democratic Services by making the constitution easier to use through changes from the snagging list and removing Cabinet Member meetings
- Ensure Overview and Scrutiny have the tools for pre-decision scrutiny for example reviewing the forward plan
- Add in procedure rules for Overview and Scrutiny for call-in and consideration of reports to the Cabinet
- Returning to the previous petition scheme, following unintended consequences with the new scheme

2.2 The working group identified that a further review of the governance arrangements and constitution would be needed in 2023/24 to prepare for the reduction in Members and in particular the arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny and Policy Advisory Committees. Democracy and General Purposes Committee agreed that this would be added to the work programme for 2023/24. Consideration could also be given to a simplified version of the constitution which has been developed to remove some of the complexities of the current version, ready for an influx of new Councillors joining the Council as a result of all out elections and boundary changes in 2024.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to consider and agree the terms of reference for the review and how the review will be undertaken. The proposed terms of reference for the review will be consideration of the bullet points below:

- The size and type of overview and scrutiny arrangements within the model
- Arrangements for Policy Advisory Committees
- a new easier to use and apply version of the constitution – to assist new members following the all-out elections in 2024

Any change to the constitution subsequently required will need to be recommended to Council for approval. Snagging items will be brought to, Democracy and General Purposes Committee for attention as they arise as per the Committee's role to regularly review the constitution in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.

- 3.2 The Committee could approach the review in a number of ways as set out below:

Option 1: Conduct the review through Democracy and General Purposes Committee Meetings

The Committee could use their diarised committee meetings to look at aspects of the governance arrangements that need to be refined. It is achievable, if well-structured and a programme of work could be developed with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee for the November and January Meeting with a final report of changes for recommendation to Council taken to the Committee meeting in March. The positives would be the involvement of all Committee members in the review, however, the format of formal webcast committee meetings may be a challenging environment to develop ideas and initiatives within and would take a lot of the Committee's time, infringing on other work.

Option 2: A working group made up of members of this committee or nominated by group leaders conducts the review

A smaller working group of Democracy and General Purposes (DGP) be created to discuss, develop and agree a model for presentation to the Committee in September taking into account those points in 3.1 and any additional requirements put forward by this Committee. The group could be formed from this Committee or through nomination by group leaders. The advantage of a working group is meetings can be held at pace, and at a greater number to allow for this work to be done quickly and inclusively. There is also more opportunity to collaborate on topics as there will be more opportunity for discussion and group work. The working group would be able to call witnesses, seek evidence and would be supported by officers to assist with the development of the model. No formal decisions can be made by the working group. This approach worked well for the review of the constitution in 2022/23.

Option 3: Officers be tasked to develop a series of options and changes for the Committee to consider

Officers would develop options for change for consideration by the Committee at its November meeting for discussion and consideration. Any additional work needed would then be completed in time for a final decision in March by this committee on the model to be recommended to Council in April 2024.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 2 as this will allow the greatest flexibility for changes to be developed by Councillors with support in the short time frame available.

- 4.2 On reviewing interim arrangements and other aspects of member involvement, the Committee throughout the year as matters are identified can add these to their work programme for review and action as appropriate. A discussion on the matters that need to be reviewed as part of the development of the work programme would be helpful.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The Committee will need to consider the risks in relation to effective governance when conducting the review.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Committee should give consideration as to the best way of engaging others in any proposed changes to the governance arrangements.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Next steps are set out in the options at 3.2 of this report, all three options will require desktop research and advice from Officers to support the review.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.