

Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

Question	Thinking about the present Cabinet and Leader System what do you like and/or dislike?	How could the present system be improved	Thinking about hybrid Model 1 (service based committees making decisions with 1 overview and scrutiny) what do you like/dislike about this model?	Thinking about Hybrid Model 2 (a model similar to KCC), what do you like and/or dislike about this model?	Thinking about the third option to return to the committee system, what do you like and/or dislike about this model?
<b>Key Points</b>	<p>Liked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed of decision making</li> <li>• Ability to be decisive</li> <li>• Allows clear strategic direction</li> <li>• Efficiency of decision making</li> </ul> <p>Dislike:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transparency</li> <li>• Not enough members involved in decision making</li> <li>• Undemocratic</li> <li>• Disempowerment of ward councillors and their residents</li> </ul>	<p>Greater pre-decision involvement</p> <p>More input from Members</p> <p>More use of the scrutiny system</p> <p>Better forward planning of decision making</p> <p>More consultation</p>	<p>Allow more members to be involved</p> <p>Members can build expertise</p> <p>Overly cumbersome</p> <p>Slow down decision making</p> <p>Decisions will take to long</p> <p>Provides a fairer way of making decisions</p> <p>No need for a scrutiny role</p>	<p>Could work, would be better than the present system</p> <p>Good to have pre-decision involvement</p> <p>A fudge that brings the worst of both worlds</p> <p>Decision making will be to far away</p> <p>Does not give enough representation</p> <p>complicated</p>	<p>concern over the speed of decision making</p> <p>can't go back to where we were</p> <p>cumbersome and lacked direction</p> <p>would engage the whole council</p> <p>not particularly a good move</p> <p>no forward planning</p> <p>lack of accountability</p>

Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

**1. Thinking about the present Cabinet and Leader system what do you like and/or dislike?**

there is not enough member to cabinet involvement prior to decisions being made and taken.

1/11/2012 14:33V

I do not like the fact that MBC has 55 councillors and it feels as though 6 are making all the decisions.

31/10/2012 18:50

Like - decisions are made quickly and are able to be put into effect in a timely fashion; current Cabinet operate on a democratic basis, ie Leader has not got a veto; the Committee system was too much of a talking shop and not a decision making body, with the result that the Council tended to be Officer led Dislike - not enough members involved in decisions, despite the o & s function, resulting in back bench members becoming less and less involved with outcomes; perhaps (despite o & s involvement) not enough consultation with members

31/10/2012 17:08

I am not keen on the Cabinet / Leader system. It appears unfair and in practice does not fully involve other members who could provide better input to the process. The current system quite undemocratic and lacks transparency.

25/10/2012 21:37

I feel we backbenchers are not kept fully aware of all the decisions made.

25/10/2012 16:15

Dislike

25/10/2012 15:30

A cabinet and leader system makes for better decision making in the sense that the process is speeded up and the council become more decisive in the approach it takes. It also enables a strategic direction to the organisation to be given which would be lost by returning to the outdated and outmoded committee system

24/10/2012 11:32

Strongly dislike the disempowerment of individual Ward Councillors (and therefore their residents) and the disproportionate influence given to Council officers and well-connected individuals and organisations. The benefits accruing from individual Councillor expertise and local knowledge have effectively been extirpated from the system. Scrutiny function is purely a distraction and sop to disempowered non-Cabinet Members. Since the introduction of Cabinet system Maidstone Borough Council policy has become increasingly divorced from the wishes of local residents and their elected representatives. It is inconceivable that the High Street re-surfacing debacle or proposed strategic

## Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

site allocations at Newnham Court Farm or M20 Junction 8 could have arisen under the old Committee system.

23/10/2012 15:40

Decisions are quicker - strategy and direction are defined - single members can be held to account

23/10/2012 15:26

Current system is time efficient compared to the old committee system

23/10/2012 11:39

Councillors are an irrelevance. Remove the permanence of the leader's position making it democratically responsible. One cabinet member has the power to use his position to carry out a personal agenda to spend say £4M with the use of threats of resignation.

23/10/2012 8:55

it is open and positive

22/10/2012 17:43

Accountability, all members can get involved in scrutiny whether or not they are an "expert in the field" or a member of the committee. Every councillor has the right to call an item to a committee and the scope of each committee is only limited by their imagination.

22/10/2012 17:26

I like the present system as it gets things done

22/10/2012 16:18

Cabinet system is efficient in getting decisions and cabinet member is always well briefed and knowledgeable about his portfolio

22/10/2012 15:44

It is not transparent especially to the general public

Submitted by hand November 2012

## **2. How could the present system be improved?**

pre decision committies or groups to assist cabinet or cabinet member with decision making

1/11/2012 14:33

I would like to see a hybrid of the current system working alongside a committee system

31/10/2012 18:50

Perhaps each Cabinet Member should consult with a (small, politically balanced) group of people before publishing a decision to get a broader input/views and iron out some difficulties which subsequently arise

31/10/2012 17:08

The present system requires far greater input from more members. We need to engage more members, allowing them to discuss and argue items with officers and not just chairman, group leaders and cabinet members. We need much more debate, which does not happen at the moment.

25/10/2012 21:37

I believe cabinet should be repalced by group leaders so decisions are shared and debated more fully cross party who ever is in control.....more working together we hopefully want the same aims to benifit the borough.

25/10/2012 16:15

Changed

25/10/2012 15:30

There needs to be more use of the scrutiny system in advising cabinet members on the decisions they are about to take. Members need to be made aware of what they can do with current system of scrutiny.

24/10/2012 11:32

Cabinet system is totally undemocratic and leads directly to poor governance. It is totally irredeemable in my view and should be scrapped.

23/10/2012 15:40

More use of Scrutiny Committee in the pre determination phase - better use of skills - identifying skills within the Councillors, sometimes we do not know what they are.

23/10/2012 15:26

## Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

Associate back benchers more closely with Cabinet positions on O &S Committees

23/10/2012 11:39

It is ponderous. Direct involvement of councillors in decision making which is effective..

23/10/2012 8:55

i do not think it needs improving

22/10/2012 17:43

We need to find a way to silence some of the councillors with loud voices. Backbenchers don't get a word in edgeways sometimes because the same old faces, often self-appointed "experts", dominate debates and conversations. Similarly, Cabinet need to have a better plan of action than the Forward Plan. It sometimes seems like they are going from one decision to the next, specified by officers and the council's day to day work programme, without really having a vision or a strategy to work towards. Sometimes, the work programme is boring and this puts off backbenchers!

22/10/2012 17:26

have a SMALL shadow committee for each Cabinet Member

22/10/2012 16:18

Better consultation with scrutiny prior to contentious decisions

22/10/2012 15:44

Full scrutiny before decision is made

Submitted by hand November 2012

**3. Thinking about Hybrid Model 1, (service based committees making decisions and 1 overview and scrutiny) what do you like and/or dislike about this model?**

this model may be good in that members to the committes would be or have some expertese in the area of discussion but not to come back to council for signoff as this could slow down decisions.

1/11/2012 14:47

I prefer this Hybrid Model as it will involve more Councillors in decision making.

31/10/2012 18:52

This sounds bureaucratically cumbersome, although the advantage of the old Committee system, ie you get experts on particular aspects of the Council's activities, does have its appeal. Despite being at the Governance Seminar, I'm not clear on where the cabinet member comes in here, or have we now done away with this position. If so then it is not going to work well. Committee decisions are never effective and no one takes ownership of the decision to see it through. So 1 like and 2 strong dislikes

31/10/2012 17:10

This is my preferred option it provides a greater input to the subject or item in question than we have at the moment. I believe it would engage members more, compared to the other options and provide a fairer level of decision making.

25/10/2012 21:41

best of the 3 options

25/10/2012 16:20

Not sure

25/10/2012 15:37

Dislike because it is cumbersome and does not deal with the problem of members not knowing the extent of abilities they have under the present system. Simply changing a vehicle does not make better drivers! Will create a less decisive organisation and the overall poolitical strategic direction and objectives will become diluted and lost. More deferrals of decisions and general drift.

24/10/2012 11:36

No need for Overview and Scrutiny role within a Committee system - as this role is delivered by the Committee system.

## Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

23/10/2012 15:49

Too much stress would be put on one Committee - The Committee system in all forms of research has shown that whilst committees make more right decisions than individuals, it takes a longer time to come to a consensus

23/10/2012 15:26

This appears to be a fudge being neither one good idea or another

23/10/2012 11:45

to much just another talk shop

22/10/2012 17:55

Members have less involvement and/or influence over matters in different committees. E.g. you may be on the environment committee... but an issue may come up that sits under housing. If you're not on that committee, what means do you have to influence it? Currently councillors can put any item they like on an agenda. Also, the scope is probably too narrow to allow councillors to think about issues outside of their normal remit (and with increased partnership working, joined up thinking, big society, place shaping, etc, we probably need to get out of that classic mould!). Finally, I don't think this system can make the tough, unpopular decisions that need to be made over the next few years. Too much party politics, pleasing the electorate, etc, comes to play. How does the policy outcomes of one service committee tally up with the strategic objectives of the council as a whole? Could you have a austere environment committee at loggerheads with a keynesian housing committee? Backwards and bonkers!

22/10/2012 17:38

Likely to lead to delays in decision making, committees become talking shops and members not likely to be well briefed or understand fully decisions

22/10/2012 15:49

Would give backbenchers involvement in decision making. Could be arduous for those on scrutiny committee.

Submitted by hand November 2012

**4. Thinking about Hybrid Model 2, (a model similar to KCC with Cabinet Committees, Cabinet and Scrutiny), what do you like and/or dislike about this model?**

this again is helpful in that pre decision the committee can be helpful in forming an appropriate outcome before signoff by cabinet.

1/11/2012 14:47

Too similar to our current model

31/10/2012 18:52

I think this could work, but we will have to dispel the belief that this works only where there is a heavy political balance in one direction. Having politically balanced advisory committees should assist in this regard, and the advantage of Hybrid 1 (expertise in a discrete range of fields) is brought into play. This is the preferable option

31/10/2012 17:10

I think this is a little top heavy. One thing that must be considered here is the actual make up of each committee. I do not think this gives as much representation as Model 1.

25/10/2012 21:41

do not feel this would bring much change ... still too much onus on the cabinet. cabinet advisory will just be doing the work for the cabinet ! we need to work together

25/10/2012 16:20

Dislike Members have less involvement in decision making "too far away"

25/10/2012 15:37

Better than committee as you maintain the strategic direction and objective setting of the authority but pre-decision scrutiny can take place under the current system if only members knew this, from cabinet to 'backbenchers'. Again, changing the vehicle does not make better drivers.

24/10/2012 11:36

The Committee system is tried and tested and works. Cabinet and Scrutiny has been tried and failed. A hybrid is a fudge that brings the worst of both worlds

23/10/2012 15:49

As above

23/10/2012 15:26

## Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

This appears to have advantages over current system operating at MBC

23/10/2012 11:45

may be a way forward

22/10/2012 17:55

It connects the cabinet members with councillors, which is where our current system has gone wrong. However, I think the cabinet committees should be chaired by the cabinet member. This way they can use it as a sounding board to share their own thoughts and ideas, and delegate work as necessary. If they are a witness to a mini-scrutiny committee, it may be too adversarial (and we want our cabinet members to be open and honest, not defensive and elusive.

22/10/2012 17:38

For a smallish District council this system is overly complicated and would not improve decision making. Present cabinet/scrutiny system better

22/10/2012 15:49

Final decision still with cabinet although more members would be involved in the advice/scrutiny to cabinet before they make their decision.

Submitted by hand November 2012

**5. Thinking about the third option a return to the committee system, what do you like and/or dislike about this model?**

I feel this des not help decisions as they can be sidelined by being a talking shop even though it may be for better more back bench involvement

1/11/2012 14:47

I have never worked in a committee system.

31/10/2012 18:52

Not a goer I'm afraid. For the reasons outlined in Q1 (slow decisions, woolly decisions, no ownership of the decisions, officer led "democracy")

31/10/2012 17:10

I do not think a return to the old commitee system is not particularly a good move, as it was cumbersome and lacked direction. This system sounds good but in practice can be slow and awkward and non productive.

25/10/2012 21:41

dont believe in going back wouldent work now.

25/10/2012 16:20

Like This bring all members close to the decision making function

25/10/2012 15:37

Same as my answer to three

24/10/2012 11:36

The Committee System engages the whole Council Membership and officer corps and debate it stimulates draws out local expertise and knowledge. The common sense present within the Committee system rails in and tempers enthusiasm for fraught policy changes. Local Plan development within MBC was, for example, far more democratic responsive to local concerns than the current evolving Core Strategy. The current Planning Committee is a good example of how well the committee system can work and where genuine cross-party consensus and debate can improve decision making.

23/10/2012 15:49

## Governance Review – Summary of Member Survey Responses

It will take too long, there will be little or no direction, direction and strategy could be at the whim of one or a small group of members - there would be no forward planning of any meaning No one could really be held to account

23/10/2012 15:26

This was time consuming and allowed too much control by officers

23/10/2012 11:45

would not like this would just become talk shop

22/10/2012 17:55

"They don't make it like they used to!". What I don't understand about this system is how the council gets any sense of direction or moves forward with ideas. Without leadership, who decides the strategic objectives? Who agrees risky (perhaps unpopular) but exciting new initiatives that ultimately benefit the borough? That said, it is always good to involve members - and the committee system is very inclusive indeed.

22/10/2012 17:38

Delays decisions and decisions likely to be politically based rather than what is best for the town. Become a talking shop

22/10/2012 15:49

Preferred option. All members involved in decision making with open debate at full council. transparent although would mean more full council meetings.

By hand November 2012