

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Audit &amp; Governance Committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>24 November 2015</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Governance improvement working group update</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Governance manager</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key Decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards Affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To note the work of the governance improvement working group to date and agree the draft design principles to inform the further work of the group

## **Recommendation(s)**

**With reference to the outcomes to date of the governance improvement working group (as set out in the report and at appendix a) the draft design principles set out in appendix b be considered and approved.**

## **Alternative options**

- 1 To not complete a review of the current governance arrangements. In July 2015 the committee approved the next steps for the working group and work has already commenced. This approval recognised agreement reached between group leaders in October 2014 and a resolution passed by Council in December 2014 reflecting some perceptions that the current governance arrangements were not sufficiently transparent and limited the extent of member and stakeholder involvement in decision making.

## Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To facilitate the continuing work of this group. This will ensure that the review of governance arrangements can be completed and recommendations made for suitable governance arrangements to be in place for the council. This exercise would in turn inform a detailed review of the current constitution.

## Key considerations

- 3 Following fact-finding work that commenced in early 2015, the committee approved on 16 July 2015 revised membership of a governance improvement working group and a timetable for work.
- 4 As agreed, the group has completed the first 'fact finding' stage and, in light of the information gathered has drafted a set of design principles to shape possible future governance arrangements.
- 5 The work of the group is progressing ahead of the timescales agreed by the committee in July and is reporting earlier than planned on the identification of design principles (November rather than January).
- 6 The draft design principles are based on the findings and a group of SWOT analyses undertaken by the working group (attached at appendix A). The design principles are described in full in appendix B, but in summary are:
  - Members and officers perform effectively in clearly defined functions and roles
  - Maximise member engagement and participation, including the involvement of all members in the development of key policies
  - Decision making is informed, transparent and efficient
  - The council welcomes public engagement and makes accountability real
7. In defining these design principles a number of action points were identified which would need to be addressed as the next stage of the process if the principles were to be realised. These actions have impact on the constitution and also on other areas as illustrated and would form the basis of any further recommendations arising which would be reported to the committee in March 2016. NB - The outcome of this stage was originally due to be reported to committee in April 2016 as agreed by committee in July.

## Community impact

- 8 Having clear and shared design principles to guide the review of the constitutional arrangements supports the council achieve its aim to be open transparent and accountable.

## Equality duty

9. The report does not impact on this area.

## **Financial implications**

10. There are no financial implications.

## **Legal implications**

11. There are no legal implications.

## **Risk management**

12. If governance arrangements are not transparent or robust there are the risks that the council's reputation may suffer; that it will be more difficult to encourage candidates to stand for election and that decision-making is less sound. By undertaking a review of governance arrangements in line with good practice these risks can be mitigated.

## **Consultees**

None at this stage.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – SWOT analysis

Appendix B - Design principles

## **Background papers**

None identified.