

Herefordshire Council

Notes from Member Workshops - present by Zoom conference sessions

22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Report by Centre for Public Scrutiny

1. It was agreed by the Rethinking Governance Working Group that the next stage in the review process should be a workshop to allow all Members to engage in the review. The workshop would provide information on various aspects of governance change and present an opportunity for Members to explore and ask questions on the various models available.
2. Due to current restrictions on physical meetings and gatherings, it was decided to provide the workshops as small group discussion using Zoom conference technology. Four on-line workshop sessions were arranged and facilitated by Ian Parry, Head of Consultancy at the Centre for Public Scrutiny. The sessions were provided as a morning, afternoon or early evening option, with an additional morning session on the second day.
3. 37 Councillors took part over the four sessions.
4. The sessions comprised a presentation and discussion on the review process and the options available. This included:
  - Why taking an analytical approach is essential in reviewing governance
  - Present governance background – purpose of governance and options available
  - Explore the strengths and weaknesses of the current governance model
  - Brief oversight of how each works, and specific examples of where councils have adopted both models
  - Discuss examples of adapting either model to create hybrids and how these can work
  - Consider an option to retain present model but with additional features to offer greater Member inclusion. Taking a gap analysis approach to explore how to strengthen and improve. But also, to retain the option to move to a different model if satisfactory improvement cannot be achieved.
  - Consider an alternative option – if satisfactory improvements can't be found then changing the governance model is explored with an understanding of the possible improvements, implication and timescales

#### Outcomes from the workshops:

- Members recognised that both governance models – Cabinet or Committee both had strengths and weaknesses
- There was a balanced discussion around the benefits of improving the current structure or moving to committee
- Members appreciated and recognised that the ‘control’ and ‘power’ in both models would inevitably reside in political groups and their relative size
- Organisational culture, involving relationships, behaviours and expectation was widely seen as a key part of ensuring that either governance model is effective, and that greater focus on culture could bring significant benefits
- Councillors also acknowledged that decision making needs to be done effectively, efficiently and often at pace and this was an important consideration in adopting a governance framework
- There was interest from Members in the decision-making role of Officers in a committee structure and how this would be democratically managed
- Members expressed views on the role of Group Leaders in sharing information and the need to consider how information on key decisions, policy change and other important information can be made easier to access for Members.

#### Member survey

This was explained to Members as part of the evidence and opinion gathering part of the review, to ascertain Member views, expectations and preferences. The survey has been drafted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and is due to be considered by the Review Group and then issued electronically via email to all Members.

#### **Ian Parry | Head of Consultancy**

**Centre for Public Scrutiny Ltd** | 77 Mansell Street | London | E1 8AN

Tel: 07831 510381 (preferred)

Tel: 020 7543 5627 (Main office)

Visit us at [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

Follow [@cfpscrutiny](https://twitter.com/cfpscrutiny) \_

**CfPS** is a registered charity: number 1136243