

Title of report: Committee effectiveness review working group

Meeting: Audit and governance committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 16 March 2021

Report by: Democratic services officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To consider the report of the working group on the effectiveness of the committee.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The committee comments on the effectiveness review carried out by the working group; and**
- b) The re-thinking governance considers the outcome of the effectiveness review as part of their work in connection with the enhanced hybrid cabinet model.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options as the committee resolved on 16 June 2020 to form a working group to enable an effectiveness review. The appendix to this report contains the outcome of this review.

Key considerations

2. On 16 June 2020 the audit and governance committee resolved to form an effectiveness review working group. The membership of the working group was agreed as Councillor Christy Bolderson (chairperson), Councillor Nigel Shaw and Councillor Yolande Watson. Due to prior commitments, Councillor Diana Toynbee replaced Councillor Watson in September 2020.
3. The purpose of the working group was to:

“The purpose of the working group would be to review the core functions of the committee, membership and effectiveness of the committee and review work programme items not currently scheduled. The review will be structured using the CIPFA practical guide for Local Authorities & Police Audit Committees and report back to the committee.”
4. The working group met on 3 occasions, 24 November, 30 November and 21 December to go through the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) documentation in order to carry out an effectiveness review on the work of the committee. The outcome of this review is attached at appendix A.
5. The monitoring officer was invited a working group meeting on 30 November and the S151 officer on 21 December. The comments from both officers were incorporated in appendix A.
6. Committee members were consulted on the effectiveness on 8 January 2021 and their comments have also been incorporated into appendix A.
7. A number of areas for improvement have identified by the working group, together with a proposed action plan. These areas for improvement can be found on page 2 to 5 of appendix A.
8. As the effectiveness review has identified areas for improvements and possible changes to the functions of the audit and governance committee as set out in the Constitution, it is suggested that the outcome of the review is sent to the re-thinking governance working group for their consideration as part of their review of the Constitution. The re-thinking governance working group are due to make recommendations to audit and governance committee on changes to the Constitution and underpinning process on 4 May 2021 which will then be forwarded to full Council on 21 May 2021 for the final decision. This would mean that all changes to the Constitution are presented in one report to audit and governance and Council.

Community impact

9. The council’s code of corporate governance commits the council to implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability. By carrying out an effectiveness review, the committee can provide assurance that they are carrying out their functions in line with good practice.

10. The Corporate Delivery Plan, 2020 to 2022 notes that 'increased involvement in the democratic process is important to us. To realise this, we shall complete the promised governance review for the council so as to increase the opportunity for the involvement of all elected representatives in decision-making.

Environmental Impact

11. This report is based on an effectiveness review of the committee, as such there are minimal environmental impacts.

Equality duty

12. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
16. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

17. There are no resource implications as result of this report as it is a review of the effectiveness of the committee.

Legal implications

18. There are no legal implications as result of this report as it is a review of the effectiveness of the committee in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) published guidance in 2018.

Risk management

19. By carrying out this effectiveness review, any risks have been identified within appendix A, together with actions to mitigate the risk.

Consultees

20. The audit and committee members were consulted on 8 January 2021 and their comments have been incorporated.

Appendices

Appendix A Effectiveness review of the audit and governance committee.

Background papers

None identified.