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**Report to: Council, 17th July 2018**

**Report of: Monitoring Officer**

**Subject: REVIEW OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

1. **Recommendation**
2. **That Full Council endorses the conclusions and recommendations from the Review of the Committee System in Section 4 of this report.**
3. **That Full Council delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Council to make any necessary changes to the Council’s Constitution to reflect the conclusions and recommendations in this report.**
4. **Background**
   1. At its meeting on 22 November 2016, Full Council resolved to change its governance system from the Cabinet model to the Committee System with effect from Annual Council on 16 May 2017.
   2. A review of the Committee System during its first year of operation has been undertaken to assess how well the new governance arrangements were implemented and how well they have functioned over the first 12 months of operation. In addition, the review has identified areas for improvement and development.
   3. This report sets out the conclusions that have been reached through the review.
5. **Review of the Committee System**
   1. The Review of the Committee System has considered the following matters:
      * Feedback from the Centre for Public Scrutiny
      * Feedback from Members and Officers of the Council through a Review Questionnaire
      * Feedback from an All-Member briefing
   2. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (“CfPS”) provided support and training to the Council as part of the implementation of the Committee System. In particular the CfPS supported the Council during the first six months of the operation of the Committee System through attendance as an observer at a range of committees. Feedback was provided to committees following meetings.

The CfPS identified certain issues that have been picked up as part of this review: the use of information reports to committees, the role of Task and Finish Groups/the scrutiny function, the role of chairs and vice-chairs of committees and effective public participation at meetings.

* 1. A Review Questionnaire was distributed to Members and Officers seeking views about the operation of the Committee System during its first year. The questionnaire sought views about the following matters:
     + Distribution of functions and responsibilities between committees
     + Effective use of committee time
     + Task and Finish Groups
     + External scrutiny role
     + Public participation
     + Joint working arrangements
     + Rules of Procedure
     + Development of a collegiate culture
  2. An All-Member briefing session was held on 2 July 2018 and this provided an opportunity for all Members to discuss the first year of the Committee System and to consider points that were raised from the Review Questionnaire. It also provided Members with an opportunity to identify areas for improvement and development.

1. **Conclusions and Recommendations**
   1. The following conclusions and recommendations can be made from the Review of the first year of the operation of the Committee System.

Distribution of functions and responsibilities between committees

* 1. The review has considered whether the functions and responsibilities of the policy committees are distributed appropriately and whether any refinements are required. The review considered whether certain functions would be more suited to a different committee and whether additional committees needed to created. Furthermore, the review identified that there are occasions when some committee meetings have lengthy agendas. Before making any changes to the structure and distribution of functions and responsibilities, it is recommended that these matters can be addressed by looking at the type of business that the committees routinely handle (this is considered in more detail below) and also through the ability of the chair of a committee to call additional meetings if there is business to be transacted. Therefore, there are no proposed changes to the distribution of functions and responsibilities of the policy committees at this time. However, it is recommended that this is kept under review and that the structure of the committees and the distribution of functions and responsibilities are reviewed again in 12 months’ time.

Effective use of committee time

* 1. The review has considered the effectiveness of committees in terms of the business that is being transacted. There are a number of matters that have emerged from the review that would help the committees to function more effectively. These can be summarised as follows.
     + The review has highlighted that some meetings have lengthy agendas. This is in part due to noting/information reports. Furthermore, committees should be using their time to make key decisions and to formulate policy.
     + A work programme for committees should be established, which should include areas for policy development by Members. As part of this, consideration needs to be given to how the policy committees are involved in the preparation of the next version of the City Plan.
     + The number of reports to committees for noting/information needs to be reduced and a more effective method for disseminating information to Members needs to be established, for example the use of All-Member briefings.
     + The review recognised that the new performance reporting system had made improvements in the timeliness of performance reporting. However, improvements can still be made in terms of the narrative that underpins performance targets, for example a clear explanation as to why a target/milestone has not been met and the corrective action that will be put in place.
     + The budget consultation process and the process for dealing with the year-end surplus need to be formally codified in the Council’s Constitution.

Task and Finish Groups

* 1. The review has recognised that Task and Finish Groups have been effective over the first twelve months of the operation of the Committee System. There are some recommended changes to the operation of Task and Finish Groups as follows.

* + - The membership of Task and Finish Groups should be open to any member of the Council and the use of substitutes should be permitted.
    - The Chair/Vice-chair of a Task and Finish Group does not need to be a member of the Committee that established the Task and Finish Group.

External Scrutiny role

* 1. The functions and responsibilities of all policy committees include the ability to undertake external scrutiny of matters within their remit. The review has recognised that external scrutiny has been limited during the first twelve months of the operation of the Committee System and that further work needs to be done to progress this. In addition, the Council appoints Members to various roles on external bodies and it was recognised that there should be a formal procedure implemented so that Members can report back to the Council on the work of those external bodies. The following actions are recommended.
     + The creation of a Scrutiny Work Programme across all committees.
     + Establishing a procedure for reporting back from external bodies to which Members have been appointed.

Public participation

* 1. The Council’s rules of procedure allow public participation at all public meetings of the Council. In practice, public participation usually takes place at Council meetings. The review has highlighted that the details relating to responses to public participation at Council and Committee meetings is not clear and that further public engagement to increase public participation would be beneficial. The following actions are recommended.
     + The responses to public participation should be made publicly available.
     + As part of a stakeholder engagement strategy, the Council needs to look at how it can engage further with members of the public.

Joint working arrangements

* 1. The Group Leaders’ Protocol set out the principles of joint working in a situation of no overall control on the Council. The review has not identified any significant issues with the operation of the Group Leaders’ Protocol. In particular the review notes that the joint working between chairs and vice-chairs of committees has been effective. However, a couple of points have emerged from the review in terms of policy development (as noted above) and the restriction on appointment to the office of Mayor to the two largest political groups. The review also noted that Members’ Allowances would be reviewed later this year. The following actions are recommended.
     + Appointment to the office of Mayor can be from all political groups on the Council.
     + To undertake a review of Members’ Allowances.

Rules of Procedure

* 1. The review has not identified any significant issues with the Council and Committee Rules of Procedure for meetings. However, there are some changes to the Rules of Procedure that will need to be made to reflect some of the recommendations in this report. Council is asked to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to make appropriate changes to the Council’s Constitution to deal with the following matters.
     + The creation of a formal procedure for budget consultation.
     + The creation of a procedure for the allocation of any year-end surplus.
     + Amendments to Council and Committee Rules of Procedure to require the publication of responses to public participation at Council and Committee meetings.
     + Amendment to the Group Leaders’ Protocol so that appointment to the office of the Mayor can be from all political groups on the Council.

Collegiate culture

* 1. The review has acknowledged that a collegiate culture exists in the Council where there is consensus. In particular the Task and Finish Groups have worked well. However, the review also recognises that where there are contentious issues and policy differences, some meetings can be more politicised than others.
  2. Overall, the implementation of the Committee System has been successful. However, as noted in the preceding paragraphs, there are areas for improvement and development. Council is asked to formally endorse the conclusions and recommendations in this section of the report.

1. **Implications**
   1. Financial and Budgetary Implications

None directly arising from this report.

* 1. Legal and Governance Implications

This review has confirmed that the Council’s new governance arrangements have operated effectively during the first twelve months of operation. It is recommended that the arrangements are kept under review and that a similar review is carried out in a further twelve months time.

* 1. Risk Implications

The Council’s Corporate Risk Register includes an entry relating to no overall political control. The joint working arrangements have mitigated this risk over the course of the first twelve months of operation of the Committee System.

* 1. Corporate/Policy Implications

As part of the implementation of the Committee System, good practice recommends that a review is carried out. It is anticipated that a further review will be carried out in twelve months time.

* 1. Equality Implications

None directly arising from this report.

* 1. Human Resources Implications

None directly arising from this report.

* 1. Health and Safety Implications

None directly arising from this report.

**Ward(s): All**

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**Background Papers: None.**