

## **Committee System Working Group**

**18 December 2019**

### **Report of the Democratic Services Manager**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To enable Council to establish a new Committee System Working Group in line with the motion agreed at the 13 November 2019 meeting of Council.

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the size of a new Committee System Working Group, as agreed at the meeting of Council held on 13 November 2019, be decided upon this meeting, having regard to the issues raised in paragraph (2) of this report; and**
- (2) That members be appointed by political groups to effect political proportionality.**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In response to a motion on notice at the last Council meeting on 13 November 2019, Council resolved:

*“This council believes that it might make better use of the skills of all its councillors and improve the democratic accountability of decision making by ceasing the current leader and cabinet model of governance and implementing a committee system. Council will establish a Working Group, with membership in balance, to investigate the best way to introduce a committee system of governance, taking into account the experiences of other councils. The investigation will lead to a detailed, legally and constitutionally sound proposal to be presented to full Council for consideration on or before its meeting in September 2020. That proposal will set out a future programme for implementation of any change to the system of governance.”*

(Minute 81 refers.)

#### **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 Council is asked to decide on a suitable size for the new Working Group, to note the political balance required, consider chairing and substitution issues for the Group, and note its terms of reference.

- 2.2 **Size of the Working Group:** The ideal size, based on current Council bodies, would appear to be seven, or possibly nine members. Most of the Council's Committees, for example, are seven Member committees; Overview and Scrutiny bodies have nine members. The recent Constitution Working Group had seven members.
- 2.3 **Political Balance:**<sup>1</sup> For Councillors' information, political balance for a seven-member group is 3 Labour, 2 MBI, 1 Conservative and 1 Green. For a nine-member group the political balance is 3 Labour, 2 MBI, 2 Conservative and 2 Green.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.4 **Chairing the Working Group:** Council may wish to determine a chair for the group tonight, or leave that to the group to decide at its first meeting.
- 2.5 **Substitution:** Council is asked to consider whether substitution will be allowed and, if so, whether there should be named, or casual substitution, or both. For investigative working groups of this type, it can sometimes be difficult for a casual substitute to keep up to speed with evidence gathering, with the result that some of their lines of questioning may already have been covered in earlier meetings. This can sometimes slow down the group's progress.
- 2.6 **Terms of Reference:** These were determined by the motion passed at the last meeting:
- (1) To investigate the best way to introduce a committee system of governance, taking into account the experiences of other councils.
  - (2) The investigation will lead to a detailed, legally and constitutionally sound proposal to be presented to full Council for consideration on or before its meeting in September 2020.
  - (3) The proposal will set out a future programme for implementation of any change to the system of governance.

### 3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 Council is asked to consider the points raised in paragraph (2) and establish the new Committee System Working Group.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clarity, the figures used are based on the political make-up in place when the political balance calculation was agreed by Council on 20 May 2019. That calculation still stands. There is currently a vacancy for Overton Ward; a by-election is due to be held on 12 December 2019 and, depending on the result, the Council's political balance calculation may change slightly.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

(including Climate Change, Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. Any costs associated with the Working Group will be met from the existing Democratic Representation budget held by Democratic Services.

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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