Notices of Motion – Council 13 December 2018

A. Comparative Analysis

Proposed by Councillor James Nicholas and Seconded by Councillor Craig Browne

This Council requests that a comparative analysis be published to enable a special meeting of Council, to be held in February 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter, to discuss and debate changing to a committee system form of governance.

Background information:

The Independent Group are calling for a report to be written and presented to Full Council in February 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter, as to why this council should change to a committee system form of governance.

- *Conservative held Canterbury Council unanimously voted to change to a committee system to prevent holding, what they deemed to be, an unnecessary and costly referendum.*
- *Two other Conservative councils were forced to hold referenda and now operate a committee system.*
- *A committee system is considered a more open, democratic and transparent form of governance, which aligns with the current drive to bring about cultural change at CEC.*
- *Residents perception is of a small 'clique' of 8 members having almost total control and decisions being made out of the public arena at informal cabinet.*
- *A cost neutral change to a committee system was achieved in Basildon, West Dorset, Sutton and Reading Unitary Council to name a few.*
- *The Independent Group is organising a petition for a referendum which is being widely supported across the borough.*
- *If a referendum is forced upon residents, the issue cannot be discussed again for a further 10 years. If the Council voluntarily decides to change then the issue can be revisited after 5 years.*
- *The cost to hold a stand-alone referendum is estimated to be between £500 - £700k.*
- *The committee system has wider Councillor engagement in the decision-making process.*
- *Macclesfield, Congleton and Crewe & Nantwich all successfully used the committee system, until it was abolished in 2001.*
- *The committee system was re-introduced by the coalition Government in 2011.*
- *The only negative comments regarding the committee system is the length of time taken for some decisions to be made. However, a fast-track procedure can be incorporated.*

B.   Allocation of Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Proposed by Councillor Craig Browne and Seconded by Councillor Arthur Moran

This Council agrees to allocate all Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Committees to opposition members as soon as is practicable.

Background information:

The Corporate Policy and Legal Services portfolio holder said he "was not against the principle of opposition chairs" at full council on the 19th Oct 2017. Nothing has progressed since.

Taken from the minutes of the Constitution meeting 14th May, 2014 (item 12) said:
That, in acknowledgement of recommendation 12 of the report by Professors Leach and Copus, as set out in Appendix A of the report to the Constitution Committee, the Council move to a position where there is some sharing of committee chairs and vice chairs with opposition parties, subject to an appropriate behavioural protocol being adopted.

The Leach report, commissioned by CEC, in 2014 said:
"The sharing of chairs amongst all represented groups is widely regarded as 'good practice' and conducive to effective scrutiny."

C.   Allocation of Committee Chairs across Political Groups

Proposed by Councillor Arthur Moran and Seconded by Councillor Bernice Walmsley

This Council agrees to allocate all remaining Committee Chairs across the political groups in line with the principle of proportionality.