

Council

Date of Meeting: 15 December 2021

Report Title: Interim Review of the Committee System

Report of: Director of Governance and Compliance

Wards Affected: All Wards

1. Report Summary

- 1.1** This report is to inform Council of the review of the functioning of governance since the Annual General Meeting on the 4 May 2021 when the committee system of governance was adopted. The Council has achieved a fundamental change in the way that decisions are made. It has achieved this through a pandemic; changes to online and physical meetings; and resources being allocated to a multitude of external issues ranging from EU withdrawal, legislative changes, market, and supply chain factors. This has required a concerted effort on the part of members and officers to ensure that the council continues to conduct its business successfully.
- 1.2** The Council's ability to make timely, urgent, and complex decisions required as a result of the fast-changing nature of the pandemic and associated changes to legislation and government guidance has continued without interruption. Many of these decisions have profound implications for communities in Cheshire East and have required coherent, complex, and fast engagements with central government and partner organisations.
- 1.3** There has been no legal or other challenge to the validity or timeliness of the Council's decision-making following the change to the committee system.
- 1.4** The change in governance is legally centred upon a specific date: 4 May 2021. The continuing improvements and alignments of internal and external policies, procedures, internal and external protocols will be reflected in continuing governance and constitutional improvements as a journey of learning and development. This journey is similar to the continuous improvement under the Cabinet style and the description

used during the 2018 review that the constitution was a 'living document' remains apt.

1.5

The policy parameters to adopt a committee system were set by Council on 19 November 2020. The approach to those parameters reflects the design principles agreed in appendix G of 19 November 2020 report (hereafter referred-to as the November report). A summary review of the five design principles against delivery is set out below. The ability of the Council to make timely, lawful decisions during the period of change of governance to a committee system has been achieved.

Openness: Virtually all members are engaged in the committee process, either by membership of a service committee, or in an oversight function. Proportional committees allow decisions to benefit from input across most political groups. Data (appendix 1) and feedback suggests wider membership of committees has resulted in wider information-sharing across elected members, and a demand for more member training in their committee subject-areas. There are slightly more public decisions in the committee system, and it is for members to assess whether they have effectively scrutinised those decisions within committee. A committee system allows more opportunities for local democracy reporting of nearly any committee decision the reporters wish.

Quick Decision Making: The committee cycle is running on a two-monthly cycle. The cabinet met 11 times over 12 months. The ability to call extraordinary meetings remains. No immediate issues have presented on timing of decisions. The prevalence of urgent decisions relates primarily to government pandemic support schemes.

Affordability: *The cost of a committee system will be kept to a minimum.* This design principle required any increase in system costs to be limited to essential elements e.g. greater participation of elected members has resulted in more officer time spent engaging with members. There is no information to suggest profligacy in the requests being received from members. Cost of the changes will always be indicative as system costs before Covid were not identified, pandemic distortion is indicated from the data and current costs are still in transition from cabinet to committee and from pandemic to business as usual. The Constitution Working Group will be asked to consider the value and nature of further analysis of costs

Legal Requirements: *The Council must comply with all legal requirements and legal advice will be available to all meetings.* Legal

advisers attend all meetings, and each report contains a section on legal and financial implications. This design principle should seek a wider interpretation relating to the democratic process and conduct of meetings which appears to be met at this time as legal requirements have changed during the pandemic.

A Modern Committee System: The system provides for equivalent public engagement as previously. There are more opportunities for engagement through a greater number of meetings, and there is a voluntary petition scheme for residents. The Scrutiny Committee has terms of reference for health partners, crime and disorder, and flood risk management.

- 1.6** This report is divided into four parts. Part 1 sets out the current operational data available from 2 rounds of the committee system. This information is limited, and caution must be used in extrapolating trends. Part 2 compares this data to historical data and encapsulates feedback from service areas. Part 3 sets out the project delivery and methodology that has been adopted for future development and improvement together with further recommendations and identifies some of the products being delivered. Part 4 sets out the current constitutional updates recommended by the Constitution Working Group with the updated Constitution.
- 1.7** An increase in resource/cost was anticipated with a design parameter of minimisation and the Part 1 data reflects that assumption. Data reliability is challenging due to the pandemic distortion and the limited time of operation of the committee system and a cautious interpretation is recommended (appendix 1).
- 1.8** The feedback in Part 2 (summary in appendix 2) centres around the need for clarity on which reports are required at committee, the use of noting reports and briefing of members. There is also a brief description of some of the mitigating actions identified.
- 1.9** The Constitution Working Group, Corporate Policy Committee and Audit and Governance Committee in respect to Code of Conduct and whistleblowing provided the member oversight and anchor for the project for continuous improvement described in part 3. The supporting project structure divides the work into 3 sections and a series of recommendations for products from the project which will be reviewed and recommended through the Constitution Working Group.

1.10 Part 4 relates to the Constitution. Previous delegations from Full Council have permitted the Monitoring Officer to adjust the Constitution to facilitate the transition to the committee system. However, certain changes are specifically reserved to Full Council. The Constitution Working Group has regular meetings to review and agree the approach to constitutional improvements. A summary is provided in Part 4 and a consolidated constitution provided in appendix 4. The whole revised constitution is attached to give full context to the changes which are tracked.

1.11 The committee system, at the time of drafting, will just be commencing the third cycle of meetings. The information, data sets, intelligence and learning that can be extracted at this time is therefore limited, this must be seen as part of a continuum of work and a cautious approach taken to policy setting on limited early data.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Council is recommended to:

- (a) Note the current and comparative data and the commentary so far.
- (b) Note the proposal for delivery of further constitutional reform through the Constitution Working Group, supported by the Brighter Future Transformation Programme.
- (c) Agree the revisions to the Constitution in Appendix 4.
- (d) Require a further review to be provided to Council (April 2022) and annually thereafter.

3. Background

3.1 On 19 November 2020 Council decided to adopt a committee style of governance. The policy basis was set in the 8 appendices to that report. Council requested a review in November 2021.

3.2 On 19 April 2021 Council approved the draft Constitution to give effect to the committee system, and approved Chapters 1 to 7 of the constitution.

3.3 On 4 May 2021, the Council held its Annual General Meeting, which commenced the operation of the committee system.

3.4 On 22 June 2021 Council approved further revisions to Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution, and Member Allowances Scheme (Chapter 5). Amendments to the management structure were also agreed with

delegation to the Monitoring Officer to make the consequential amendments required to give effect to the new management structure.

3.5 The review and development of the committee system has continued, which is in turn supported by development of the Constitution. This report updates Council on issues wider than the Constitution and sets out the context and issues surrounding further development. The development of an effective and efficient governance structure is never a completed task but one of continuous learning and improvement which reflects the changing environment of local government. Recent experience has shown how the speed of change is often determined by external factors, exemplified by remote meetings, urgent decisions, response to rapid changes in legislation or a health crisis.

3.6 The Constitution at appendix 4 is a consolidated text and shows by tracked changes alterations to Chapters 1, 2 and 3 from 22 June 2021 and all changes to chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 since April 2021.

4. PART 1 Current

4.1 Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny have been replaced by six service committees and a standing Finance Sub Committee. Various free-standing committees, such as Staffing etc have been merged with service committees. In summary, the number of meetings completed (approximately a half year) have been estimated to an annual figure:

<i>Number of <u>meetings</u></i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Annualised Total	36	35	40
<i>Number of <u>reports</u></i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Annualised Total	256	233	261

4.2 The table above currently suggests a trend to slightly more meetings and more reports under the new system. It is probable there will be adjustments to the data as Work Programme and Forward Plan provides a basis for extrapolation within these numbers. Essentially accuracy will improve with actuals against estimates.

4.3 These data sets have additional caveats. The data shows distortion through the pandemic period, e.g.

- a) urgency powers, covid reporting etc.
- b) The shortness of time would not identify municipal in-year variations.
- c) The Council has not completed a budget cycle under the committee system.
- d) The impact of the clarification of significant decisions which must go to committee.
- e) The impact of Council deciding Portfolio Holder decisions should go to committee.
- f) Learning from the initial phase has yet to be incorporated in our approach.
- g) Member initiated items have increased the total by 6.
- h) Underlying assumption can be challenged, for example Corporate Policy Committee also fulfils the role of staffing committee (currently excluded) and the validity of including that figure.

4.4 The use of the prepopulated work programmes has allowed a line of sight of future decisions and has provided some insight to allow matters to be reprioritised at need. As each committee fulfils a scrutiny function in its own sphere a proportion of the work programme and noting reports relate to that function.

5. PART 2 Comparative information and Member/Officer Feedback

5.1 The comparative data below is subject to the caveats outlined above. The supporting tables are in appendix 1.

- (a) The number of formal meetings being held under the Cabinet model both pre and post-Covid was static at around 36 a year. The committee system is projecting 40 meetings a year.
- (b) The number of reports being presented to those meetings reduced during the Covid era (from 256 to 233 a year) but is currently projected to reach 261 under the Committee system.
- (c) The average length of meetings rose from 2 hours 6 mins before Covid to 2 hours 46 mins during the Covid Era (an increase of 32%). It has since reduced to 2 hours 10 mins.
- (d) The total volume of paperwork being submitted into meetings rose substantially from 6,589 pages per year before Covid to 7,529 per year during the Covid Era (a 14% increase). That has reduced somewhat under the Committee system, with a projected 6,828 pages per year (still a 4% increase before Covid).
- (e) The total amount of Member time spent in meetings increased from 1,220 hours a year in meetings before Covid to 2,107 hours a year during the Covid Era (an 73% increase). Under the committee system it has dropped below pre Covid levels, projected at 1,067 hours in total.

- (f) The total amount of officer time spent in meetings also increased from 366 hours a year before Covid to 561 hours per year during the Covid Era (a 53% increase) and this has continued to rise under the committee system to a projected 585 hours (60% higher than before Covid levels). A further analysis will be required to consider the impact of member briefings and the increase in number of officers involved in committee work.
- 5.2 The impact of the pandemic distorts any direct comparison. The changes may relate to an ambition set out in the Corporate Plan, the commencement and cessation of online meetings, or lengthy meetings on single controversial issues which are not dependant on the governance arrangements or simply the change period itself and embedding of new systems. Council also decided to refer more decisions to committee by requiring Cabinet member/Portfolio holder decisions to be referred to committee.
- 5.3 In general the data is consistent with anecdotal feedback and pre-committee system assumptions. Increased officer time was anticipated with directors engaging with committees, and the desire by members to have relevant subject knowledge. The use of noting papers to engage and inform members will require additional analysis.

Feedback

- 5.4 Informal conversations with members have raised functional and operational issues. It is proposed that members' views are captured in a more formal manner as part of the Brighter Futures Transformation Programme for the next review. It is important to incorporate any learning around change and identify areas of improvement from the decision makers perspective.
- 5.5 Members have opined that they have become familiar with Cabinet Members/Portfolio Holders presenting reports to Cabinet and having the opportunity to question a political lead. Reports are now presented by officers to a cross-party committee, all of whom may ask questions of the officer but not of the political mind that initiated the report. Reports arise from the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which set the policy and budgetary framework, but the opportunity to ask political questions is missed. This may be a temporary or transitional factor as reports have a gestation period predating the adoption of the committee system. Over time, the reports will reflect more committee-generated items. It should be noted, as clearly articulated in the November 2020 report, that it is intrinsic within any committee governance that any matter not delegated to a committee will be

resolved by officers. There is no provision for single-member decisions (such as portfolio holder or Leader decision) and there can be no gaps in decision making.

- 5.6** Officer feedback is set out in summary in appendix 2. Some of the common themes are explored here. The number of noting reports for committee, together with requests for member and officer training may be considered related. The anecdotal explanations given relate to officers developing understanding of the system through transition and desire by committee members to fully understand their committee's area of operation. Previously knowledge was concentrated in Cabinet Members who built up a reservoir of knowledge and experience both across the Council but specifically in their portfolio area. That knowledge needs to be shared across the 13 members of each new committee, many of whom will be unfamiliar with the genesis of reports that were initiated under the cabinet system.
- 5.7** A development programme can be created to support members and officers. Mitigation will be seen through greater sharing of information with members outside of committee; in addition to agenda items/reports, member briefings will include core knowledge to provide better background for members. The need for noting papers should reduce as the reservoir and depth of knowledge and experience over a wider membership increases.
- 5.8** Additional clarity is required on the operational delivery of day-to-day matters and where members consider an appropriate level of oversight is needed. These are not directly related to the change in governance system as these issues existed previously. The committee system has generated a wider discussion on operational efficiency and this opportunity will be used to engage with members to improve the clarity and understanding of how members' time can be focused on the relevant and important. For example, a 'business as usual' procurement pipeline to the Finance Sub Committee may give members adequate reassurance that the day to day functioning of the Council is safeguarded, whereas specific service committee procurement may engender greater interest. The development of this approach over time is aligned with the design principle of timeliness, transparency, and cost.
- 5.9** The better decision making workstream will need to consider how members can be supported to help improve the quality of decision making by early engagement in respect of background information questions or proposed amendments.

6. PART 3 Project Delivery and Further Recommendations

- 6.1** The original task centred around the delivery of a functional constitution reflecting the needs of the organisation for a committee style of governance. That was by necessity led through a need to ensure compliance and legal adherence to the wider statutory framework against a set timetable. Members lead the wider committee development through the Constitution Working Group , Corporate Policy, and Audit and Governance Committees. To enable officers to support the committees and the Constitution Working Group, a project within the officer Brighter Futures Together Governance Board has been created and benefits from dedicated project support with engagement and improvement focused on a much wider basis. There are three project boards in this work stream 1. Better Decision Making 2. Governance and Financial Codes 3. Policy and Performance.
- 6.2** Better Decision Making. This area will concentrate on continued improvement in how decisions are made. The administrative policy and the supporting process, the structure of reports, member information and the balance between strategic member oversight and operational delivery fall within this area, as well as partnership working arrangements.
- 6.3** Governance and Financial Codes. This area will consider compliance and updates to good governance codes, financial codes, reporting and oversight and the annual governance statement. Again, where improvements are identified a recommendation will be made to the relevant working group or committee. An important element of this review is to ensure consistency between financial codes and delegations. Council should also note that a full budget cycle under the committee system will not be completed until next year and it is anticipated recommendations will be made in respect to developing the budget process.
- 6.4** Policy and Performance. The current approach was centred on changing the existing constitutional arrangements to reflect a committee system. A longer-term approach will ensure the ambitions of Council through the Corporate Plan will become the primary drivers for governance changes. At the most basic level the social and political policy ambitions of the Council in the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (subject to legal and financial constraints) should be the core drivers for changes to the financial codes and the Constitution to reflect and support the delivery of those ambitions. Mainstream policy development is not within this project, but policy development may be supported by the

future development of the committee system. This may help develop a clear process or methodology to enable service committees to instigate and generate policy concepts for officers. The committee system will also need to develop a clear mechanism to measure its own effectiveness and performance. Those measures will then inform areas for improvement.

- 6.5** In descriptive terms, the better decision-making workstream and the governance and financial codes workstream represent the financial, legal and governance brake. The better the brakes, the faster the organisation can move forward, act and react to the needs of its residents and the wider environment. That is the ultimate ambition of the project described in part 3.

7. PART 4 Constitutional Update

- 7.1** The predominant work undertaken at this time relates to Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Constitution. The Constitution Working Group has to date met on 5 occasions since the Annual Council meeting on 4 May 2021, which introduced the committee system. Work includes:

- a) Questions from Members at Council meetings. (June Council)
- b) Member requests for items of business to be included on a committee agenda.
- c) Updated member allowances scheme – mileage rates.
- d) Changes to the Constitution following senior management restructure.

- 7.2** Chapter 5 relates to the Member Allowances Scheme. This was approved at Council on the 22 June 2021 and has now been inserted into the Constitution. The mileage and subsistence allowances have been explicitly linked to reflect the same allowances to officers. This will ensure we are operating one system and avoid anomalies arising as a result of updating omissions. The mileage allowance makes explicit reference to electric vehicles, so members are clear there is no disadvantage to adopting an environmental stance.

- 7.3** Chapter 6 is the Glossary, and this has several revisions. The Glossary is where the definitions of roles and responsibilities used in the Constitution are found and is key to interpretation. There are some significant changes to the text. Some changes were previously approved by Council and were awaiting inclusion; others are new or revised. There are reworked definitions of Budget and Policy Framework, data protection legislation, significant decisions, group spokespersons, treasury management and group administrator (formerly whip).

- 7.4** Significant decisions. These are decision that need to go to committee. There are no 'Key Decisions' in a committee system but clarity on where a decision should be made was requested. The previous definition was simplified to a decision over £1m unless the context required otherwise. This was causing confusion as the Council has numerous 'business as usual' decisions over £1m which would have required routine reports to committee. These are now captured in a single report to Finance Sub Committee with an approval for the matters identified in the 'procurement pipeline report' not requiring further member input. The context issue was also open to wide interpretation, so it is suggested this reverts to the more traditional significant impact on two or more wards. There was textual conflict with existing officer delegations.
- 7.5** Council in November 2020 approved definitions and role descriptions. Some have now been incorporated, e.g., the role of the Leader of the Council was approved in the November 2020 report and can now be found in a revised summary in the glossary and with a link to the full supporting document in chapter 7.
- 7.6** Chapter 7 of the Constitution contains the list of associated documents. These are documents, many having been previously agreed by Council, that inform, interpret, or explain elements of the Constitution. Although they are not contained within the Constitution, they are essential for interpretation and establishing a common understanding. The previous list of supporting documents had grown to an extent that it had become a reference library in its own right, with many documents only having a tenuous relationship with the Constitution. There was duplication and recasting of the same document over a period of time. The original list has been significantly pruned and the remaining documents are being updated.
- 7.7** The Constitution Working Group will continue to meet and will revise the supporting documents and recommend any consequential material changes. Although most changes are for consistency there are new and revised documents. This includes the description of lead members for committees. At this time members should note the revisions to the:
- (a) Petitions Scheme (attached at Appendix 5)
 - (b) Definition of Group Lead Members (contained with the glossary of the Constitution).
 - (c) Role of Chairs – (attached at Appendix 5)
 - (d) Role of Leader – (attached at Appendix 5)

7.8 Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for the Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policy. The Committee has set up a working group to review these provisions. This is a key update and is based on the Committee for Standards in Public Life report in January 2019 and the consequential Local Government Association's updated Model Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct is currently in draft form and has been shared with town and parish councils for consultation. Following the consultation period, revised drafts of the Code of Conduct, the process for dealing with complaints, and the whistleblowing policy, are currently scheduled for Audit and Governance Committee in January 2022.

7.9 The Members Code of Conduct will require approval at Full Council, and support and engagement from town and parish councils if it is to be an effective way for members to show the public the transparency and accountability requested. Any revisions to the Whistle Blowing policy will also fall to this committee.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1 Engagement with members is primarily through the Constitution Working Group and where relevant, for Codes of Conduct, the Audit and Governance Committee. Future member engagement will be formalised through the project arrangements. All directorates have contributed to the feedback.

9 Implications

9.1 Legal

9.1.1 The proposed amendments to the Constitution are part of the continuing development of the committee system. Although predominately to ensure consistency with a committee style of governance, changes require approval of Full Council such as the editorial amendments to terms of reference.

9.1.2 The Constitution is the functioning rule book used by all officers and members in driving forward the business of the Council. Like any set of rules, it needs to remain current and consistent with the intent of Council and practicable in the delivery of the Council's objectives.

9.1.3 The core elements of the Constitution are set through various legislative regimes and the current Constitution appears to meet

the substantive legal requirements. The areas in which the Council has a discretion must also remain broadly reasonable and consistent with the objectives of the Council.

9.1.4 Failure to keep the Constitution under review and adapt to the changing needs of the organisation will build in levels of risk into the decision-making process. Those risks may manifest themselves as delay, poor quality decisions or ultimately a challenge to the decision itself.

9.2 Finance

9.2.1 The unavoidable costs relate to system change and implementation. A reliable cost analysis is not possible after only two committee cycles and Councillors will need to remain mindful of Full Council policy parameters when requesting additional reports and new elements for the work programmes.

9.2.2 Appendix 1 indicates a potential trend which may increase the resources required to support each committee, but no direct budgetary implication has been identified.

9.2.3 As the committee system progresses a costing methodology for reports will need to be developed.

9.2.4 This proposal returns the project has no additional budgetary implications.

9.2.5 There are no direct cost implications of the constitutional updates.

9.3 Policy

9.3.1 The Corporate Plan 2021-25 includes the vision for an Open, Fair and Green Cheshire East. The move to a committee form of governance is a priority in the Corporate Plan.

9.4 Equality

9.4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the original decision to change governance. The accessibility and intelligibility of the Constitution has remained at the forefront of the drafting process. Accessibility and transparency are core design principles and additional learning has been incorporated through the changes to and the review of remote meetings.

9.5 Human Resources

9.5.1 There are direct implications for human resources. Staff (and members) have requested additional training. Training requests include process training on how decisions are made, and practical issues such as additional training on report writing given the change in audience from cabinet to committee. Members have sought better understanding of how to obtain best results from officers who present reports, consistency in style of recommendations, to process and procedural issues.

9.6 Risk Management

9.6.1 The risk of changing systems of governance were set out in paragraph 1.6 onwards of the November 2020 report. The Council has continued to effectively manage the strategic risks related to the wider pandemic, changes in legislation on meetings, resource constraints and the fixed time frame set by the November decision. At present these risks appear to have been successfully mitigated.

9.6.2 The review of the operational effectiveness of the committee system and supporting constitution is an essential component of ensuring the efficacy of corporate decision making which is a key element of continuing risk mitigation.

9.7 Rural Communities

9.7.1 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

9.8 Children & Young People

9.8.1 There are no direct implications for children and young people.

9.9 Public Health

9.9.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

9.10 Climate Change

9.10.1 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	David Brown, Monitoring Officer & Director of Governance and Compliance
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. committee system data 2. feedback summary 3. project plan 4. Constitution 5. associated documents
Background Papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 November 2020 Council Committee Report • 19 April 2021 Council Constitution Report • 4 May 2021, Council Annual General Meeting • 22 June 2021 Constitution Report

Appendix 1

The Committee System came into force on 5th May 2021 for a period of at least five years. This system disbanded Cabinet, as well as the old Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Constitution Committee and replaced those with six new Service Committees.

1. Committee System Data

Name of Committee	Total No. of Meetings held (includes meetings anticipated to take place throughout November)	Total No. of reports considered, (includes anticipated items to be considered at the November meetings)	Other items (petitions, requests by Members for items to be included on the work programme)	Additional Working Groups Established	Average length of time of Meeting Not including Nov meeting
Adults and Health Committee	3	24	0	0	2 Hours 19 Mins
Children and Families Committee	3	26	0	0	3 Hours 17 Mins
Corporate Policy Committee	4	27	1	1	2 Hours 18 Mins
Economy and Growth Committee	3	14	1	1	2 Hours 3 Mins

Environment and Communities Committee	3	19	2	0	1 Hours 39 Mins
Finance Sub Committee	5	14	1	2	1 Hours 4 Mins
Highways and Transport Committee	3	20	1	1	3 Hours

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on all elements of Council activity. For the purposes of this analysis, we have therefore looked at three separate periods:

- (1) Operation of the Committee system (May 2021 onwards)
- (2) Operation of the Cabinet system during the Covid-19 pandemic (Covid Era) (March 2020 to May 2021)
- (3) Operation of the Cabinet system for a similar length period before covid (January 2019 to March 2020)

This analysis looks at several indicators across the three time periods:

Number of meetings

<i>Number of <u>meetings</u></i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Cabinet	13	12	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	25	24	0
Constitution Committee	3	4	0
Service Committees	0	0	17
Total	41	40	17
Meetings / day	0.10	0.10	0.11
Annualised total	36	35	40

2. Number of reports

<i>Number of <u>reports</u></i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Cabinet	86	81	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	147	136	0
Constitution Committee	18	15	0
Portfolio Holder Decisions	43	35	0
Service Committees	0	0	110
Total	294	267	110
Reports / day	0.70	0.64	0.71
Annualised total	256	233	261

3. Length of meetings

<i>Length of meetings</i>	<i>Cabinet before-Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid Era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Cabinet	22.6	30	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	55.5	65.6	0
Constitution Committee	8	14.9	0
Service Committees	0	0	36.9
Total	86.1	110.5	36.9
Meeting hours / day	0.21	0.26	0.24
Annualised total	75	96	87
Average meeting length	2.10	2.76	2.17

4. Size of agenda packs

<i>Meeting papers</i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid Era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Pages</i>
Cabinet	3,120	3,906	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	3,014	2,831	0
Constitution Committee	290	894	0
Portfolio Holder Decisions	1,140	1,012	0
Service Committees	0	0	2,881
Total	7,564	8,643	2,881
Pages / day	18.05	20.63	18.71
Annualised total	6,589	7,529	6,828

5. Member attendance at meetings

<i>Members' time in meetings</i>	<i>Cabinet before-Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid Era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Cabinet	521	1,030	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	752	979	0
Constitution Committee	127	410	0
Service Committees	0	0	450
Total	1,400	2,419	450
Meeting hours / day	3.34	5.77	2.92
Annualised Total	1,220	2,107	1,067

6. Officer attendance at meetings

<i>Officers' time in meetings</i>	<i>Cabinet before Covid</i>	<i>Cabinet Covid Era</i>	<i>Committee</i>
	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Cabinet	159	253	0
Overview & Scrutiny Committees	215	291	0
Constitution Committee	46	100	0
Service Committees	0	0	247
Total	420	644	247
Meeting hours / day	1.00	1.54	1.60
Annualised Total	366	561	585

Appendix 2

Feedback Summary

Officers generally considered that Member engagement and briefing was positive and working well.

Cross group support in committee can be beneficial to projects.

Areas of additional comment:

1. General perception of greater officer time servicing committees and more officer time spent in formal engagement with members. This is reported across all service areas. Although no additional resources officers are coping well but the workload does appear to be higher than before.
2. Pre-Committee briefings work well but late substitution of unbriefed members can be problematic. Perception that substitutes or unbriefed members are generating a high number of questions.
3. Proposed amendments to recommendations which are put forward in committee without notice cause difficulty. Advance notice of proposals would allow officers to prepare and be able to answer questions about the impact of any proposed change.
4. Member requests for additional information/noting reports. This was linked with a suggestion for increased member training to increase subject area knowledge. Important to give members a wider context under which they are making decisions which may impact on residents, and the impact of decisions or not making a decision.
5. Additional officer training on the new system, and on writing concise reports.
6. Duplication of functions in strategies that cross age ranges in social care. Suggestion that the new system is more complex for cross cutting decisions.
7. Length and complexity of some technical reports puts members under time pressure to read and understand and/or request additional information.

8. Acceptance of Grants process unhelpful and creates potential delay. Raised by social care, education, and place. The £1m limit is too low in terms of delay and delivery. Note. This is not a product of the committee system, but an issue carried forward from the Cabinet system.
9. The process for applying for bids and authorisation of the funds should be made simpler, due to the time it takes to progress a Committee report,
10. Volume of noting and information papers was raised across all services. Reports to committee need to focus on core strategic issues.
11. A need for committee officers to feel empowered to bring to the attention of meetings, those matters which are in need of advice.
12. Procedural consistency, training for committee chairs and members. Procedural issues are treated differently at different meetings. The rules are set out in the Constitution, but are not always followed e.g., length of time allowed for speaking/ repeat speakers etc. Difficult for officers to advise across committees.
13. Clarification of definition of a 'significant decision'.

Appendix 3

