
Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting: 04 November 2021

Report Title: Interim Review of the Committee System

Report of: David Brown, Monitoring Officer & Director of Governance and Compliance

Report Reference No: CP/22/21-22

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

1. Report Summary

- 1.1** This report asks the committee to recommend the Committee Review Report in appendix 1 to Full Council on the 18 November 2021.
- 1.2** On 19 November 2020 full council resolved to move to a committee system form of governance at the next annual general meeting. This occurred on 4 May this year. Council required a review to be presented to Full Council in November 2021.
- 1.3** Corporate Policy Committee, through its Constitution Working Group, hold primary responsibility for delivery of this review.
- 1.4** The report in appendix 1 is divided in to four parts. Part 1 sets out the current operational data available from 2 rounds of the committee system. Part 2 encapsulates feedback from service areas. Part 3 sets out further recommendations and identifies the future project delivery methodology that has been adopted. Part 4 sets out the current constitutional updates recommended by the Constitution Working Group. A consolidated updated text of the constitution is also provided.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1** Recommend the presentation of the Committee Review Report set out in Appendix 1 to Full Council.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The report has been requested by Full Council.

4. Background and detailed proposals

4.1 This report arises from an obligation placed on officers by Full Council. It reflects the first opportunity to review the functioning of the committee system so far and proposes the future approach to the review and adaptation of the governance structures of the council to meet changing demands.

5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1 The Constitution Working Group are the architects of the constitutional updates. The Services have been asked to contribute to the feedback as have all Members.

6. Implications

6.1 Legal

6.1.1 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.

6.1.2 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.

6.1.3 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.

6.1.4 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.

6.2 Finance

6.2.1 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.

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

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

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

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

6.3 Policy

6.3.1 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.

6.4 Equality

6.4.1 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.

6.5 Human Resources

6.5.1 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.

6.6 Risk Management

6.6.1 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.

6.6.2 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.

6.7 Rural Communities

6.7.1 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8 Children & Young People

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

6.9 Public Health

6.9.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10 Climate Change

6.10.1 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	David Brown, Monitoring Officer & Director of Governance and Compliance
Appendices:	1. Interim review of the committee system report – Full Council
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