

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING – 16TH MAY 2012

Extract from the Minutes of the Constitution Committee Meeting on 11th May 2012

63. PROPOSED COUNCIL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered a report on the work undertaken so far by the Joint Member Working Group appointed by Council to investigate the options available for new governance arrangements. The report proposed changes to the existing arrangements.

Council had appointed the Working Group to consider all available options to review governance arrangements under the Localism Act 2011.

The Joint Member Working Group had given thought to the options available and had concluded that neither a directly-elected Mayor nor a committee system would meet the needs of the Council. The Group had therefore worked on arrangements based on the existing leader and cabinet model but which would allow for greater involvement of non-executive Members in policy development and review.

The Committee had before it the minutes of the Working Group's meeting on 20th April 2012, together with the Borough Solicitor's report to the Working Group. These explored in detail a number of alternative governance options. A summary of the Working Group's preferred option, Option B, was circulated at the Committee's meeting as follows:

- Leader and Cabinet
- Up to 9 Portfolios
- Cheshire East Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
- Cross-party "Policy Groups" aligned with Cabinet. These would:
 - be non-decision-making (ie would act in an advisory capacity)
 - operate in shadow form at an early stage
 - review and develop policy and advise upon significant service delivery issues
 - have access to financial and performance information
 - meet in private but with the option of meeting in public
 - call on Officers and Cabinet Members to attend
- An announcement of the proposals to be made at the Annual Council meeting with the projected timeline being the end of the calendar year
- Option C to be considered in due course

Members noted that Option C would provide for the Policy Groups to become full decision-making bodies. A move towards this could be considered in due course as further guidance was published and in the light of experience with the arrangements now proposed. Members were strongly of the view that the Council should eventually aim to move to Option C.

RESOLVED

That Council be recommended to agree that

- (1) with effect from the end of a shadow period of operation, which shall end no earlier than September 2012, the existing Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be dissolved and be replaced with two Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the names and provisional terms of reference set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) with immediate effect Council establishes, initially in shadow form, up to nine Policy Groups, aligned with the Cabinet, with the provisional terms of reference set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (3) the Leader will determine the size and cross party composition of the Policy Groups and invite the Political Groups to notify the Borough Solicitor of their nominations;
- (4) the consideration of the terms of reference of the two new Overview and Scrutiny Committees be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen in the June/July cycle of meetings and the terms of reference thereafter be finalised by Council, following consideration by the Constitution Committee;
- (5) the consideration of the terms of reference of the new Policy Groups be referred to the shadow Policy Groups in the June/July cycle of meetings and thereafter be finalised by Council, following consideration by the Constitution Committee; and
- (6) the Borough Solicitor submit a further report to Council which will enable Council to formalise all remaining arrangements following the shadow period.