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## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 7 January 2021

**Report Title:** Amalgamation of the Council's Member Forum and Panels

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Jill Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services

**Senior Officer:** Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. The Committee is invited to comment on a proposal to amalgamate the Council's three informal member Panels; Brighter Future Members' Forum, the Member Technology and Development Panel and the Members' Enquiries Service Panel, into one body.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That any recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be submitted to the next meeting of the Members' Forum for consideration.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1. To better inform the decision on the proposed merger of the Panels which may create efficiencies, avoid duplication and will promote a more holistic approach to the support provided to Members.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. There is no change to the three Member Panels, and they remain as they are. This has been discussed with the Panels and their clear preference is to amalgamate for the reasons above.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1. Cheshire East Council currently has three informal Member bodies; the Members' Forum, established to provide a political steer and joint advocacy of the Brighter Future Transformation Programme objectives; the Member

Technology and Development Panel which considers Councillors' needs in respect of their IT and personal development; and the Members' Enquiries Service Panel, which monitors the operational aspects of the Members' Enquiries Service (MES) and suggests improvements to the service.

- 5.2. Over the last twelve months, the work of the three bodies has begun to overlap and potentially overlaps with the role of committees post May 2021.

### **The Proposal**

- 5.3. A proposal has come forward from the Chairman of the Members' Forum to amalgamate the Forum and the two Panels into a single body to create efficiencies, avoid duplication and promote a holistic approach to the delivery of its objectives.
- 5.4. The Brighter Future Members' Forum first discussed the proposal to amalgamate in May 2020 and, more recently, at its meeting on 18 November 2020. Members present indicated that they would support the merger, provided that the cultural role of the Forum was not diminished. The report and draft Terms of Reference discussed at those meetings are appended to this report.
- 5.5. The Forum was supportive of the proposals set out in paragraph 4.1 of the attached report (appendix A) but indicated that it wished to hear the views of the Chairman and Members of the other Panels and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, before reaching a conclusion.
- 5.6. A meeting between the three Chairmen took place on 17 December 2020, who were in support of the proposals and Terms of Reference.
- 5.7. Taking the views of the Forum into account, Terms of Reference have been drafted for the new body, using as its framework the workstreams set out in the Brighter Future Transformation Programme, albeit modified slightly to account for the Forum and the Panels' present responsibilities i.e.

#### **Transformation workstreams**

- Culture
- Estates and ICT
- Customer experience
- Commercial
- Governance

#### **Proposed workstreams**

- Culture
- ICT
- Members' enquiries
- Community engagement
- Governance

- 5.8 The inclusion of community engagement as a workstream reflects the current role of the Forum in respect of its interaction with internal and external stakeholders.
- 5.9 It has also been suggested that a sixth workstream of risk management be added, to enable the Group to identify, manage and mitigate those risks which may impact on the delivery of its objectives and outputs.

- 5.10 The Committee should note the workstreams and focus on how Councillors engage with the Council, and to help and advise the Council to support Councillors in the operational aspects of being a Councillor.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

- 6.1.1. The new body will continue to be non-decision making, with recommendations submitted to the appropriate decision-making body.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

- 6.2.1. Efficiency savings can be achieved by reducing the number of meetings held.

### **6.3. Policy Implications**

- 6.3.1. None identified.

### **6.4. Equality Implications**

- 6.4.1. None identified.

### **6.5. Human Resources Implications**

- 6.5.1. None identified.

### **6.6. Risk Management Implications**

- 6.6.1. It is proposed that a sixth workstream be introduced to enable the body to identify, manage and mitigate those risks which may impact on the delivery of its own objectives and outputs.

### **6.7. Rural Communities Implications**

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

### **6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

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

### **6.9. Public Health Implications**

- 6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

### **6.10. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.10.1. A reduction in the number of meetings will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

7.1. Implications are borough wide.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

8.1. The report has been shared with the Chairmen and membership of the Member Technology and Development Panel and the Members' Enquiries Service Panel.

## **9. Access to Information**

9.1. Terms of reference for the Brighter Future Members' Forum, the Member Technology and Development Panel and the Members' Enquiries Service Panel.

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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