

COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM. 13(b)
17 DECEMBER 2014	PUBLIC REPORT

ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S
FROM : Chair of the Alternative Governance Working Group
That Council agrees to defer any decision on an alternative form of governance until March 2015 allowing the Alternative Governance Working Group in the interim to begin consultation with Councillors on the committee system and a hybrid model of governance

1. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 On 16 June 2014 Council resolved to explore a change in its current governance arrangements. For this purpose it set up a working group to consider and report back on the options available (including the move to a committee system, elected mayor or continuation of the current arrangements or a version of those arrangements).
- 1.2 Council agreed that the working group should report back to Council within six months to review proposals for a change in governance. This report reviews what action has been taken by the working group, seeks to defer any decision on alternative arrangements at this time and requests that Council agree a new timetable for implementation of alternative proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Before the Local Government Act 2000, Councils took all decisions at either full council or the committee to which it had delegated that responsibility. Individual officers also had some limited delegation of responsibility.
- 2.2 The 2000 Act abolished the committee system and required all councils to adopt a new executive model of governance with either an elected mayor and cabinet, a council manager or an elected leader and cabinet.
- 2.3 Peterborough City Council has operated executive arrangements since 2001 under a Leader and Cabinet model with delegated decision making resting with the Cabinet or individual Cabinet members according to their portfolio. There is limited delegation to officers for non-key executive decisions.
- 2.4 The Localism Act 2011 allowed Councils to exercise discretion regarding their governance arrangements and Councils were therefore permitted to return to a committee system or adopt other governance arrangements.

In June 2014 the Council decided to set up an Alternative Governance Working Group to review alternative methods for decision making. This meant a review of four options:

- An elected mayor
- A return to the committee system

- An executive system, the same or with variations to the current arrangements
 - An alternative model of governance which would require authority from the Secretary of State
- 2.5 A variation of the existing executive arrangements or an entirely new form of governance are often referred to as 'hybrid' models of governance as they tend to be a combination of various elements of more than one system.
- 2.6 The Alternative Governance Working Group began its work with a paper consultation exercise on Councillors preferred governance arrangements. This yielded only 16 responses from members (28%) with opinion split evenly between the current Cabinet system and the Committee system.
- 2.7 The Alternative Governance Working Group has met on four occasions between July and November and conducted 3 visits to 4 different authorities: two operating a committee system and two operating hybrid models. Kingston Upon Thames also attended the final meeting to discuss their committee system arrangements.

3. Elected Mayor

- 3.1 The Alternative Governance Working Group discussed the role of the elected mayor at their first meeting. The role of the elected mayor did not generally find support amongst the Group members as it was considered to be the least inclusive model of governance with all executive power being held by the elected mayor.

4. The Committee System

- 4.1 The Alternative Governance Working Group visited Cambridgeshire County Council and Norfolk County Council who have both reverted to a committee system from a former Leader and cabinet model.
- 4.2 The Group found that the distinct advantage of the committee system over the current executive arrangements is that all members take part in decision making through committee meetings.
- 4.3 The primary disadvantage, as put forward by both County Councils, is the loss of the role of Leader. Both Councils had however sought to retain a leadership figure, in name only, in the new structure.
- 4.4 Although both Councils reported that the change to the committee system was retained within current budgets, both were undertaking a review of the manner in which the system was operating and the cost of the support team is forming part of that review.
- 4.5 During a visit to Wandsworth Council the Alternative Governance Working Group also heard from a senior officer at Kingston Upon Thames London Borough Council which also operated a committee system. The Kingston model differed from the county models in that it favoured area committees and local decision making. It also retained the usual regulatory and strategic committees e.g. a General Purposes Committee, however this model did not generally find favour with the Group as it was perceived to be complicated and not generally a good fit for Peterborough.

5. The Hybrid Models

- 5.1 Kent County Council and Wandsworth London Borough Council both operate 'hybrid' models which are in fact a variation of the current executive model. The two Councils

had chosen to operate almost identical models of alternative governance with the Kent model largely deriving its model from Wandsworth.

- 5.2 In this model the Cabinet and Leader are retained however the scrutiny committees play a much larger role in policy development and decision making. All decisions to be made by Cabinet or Cabinet members go through the scrutiny committees in advance of the Cabinet meeting or CMDN. Although the scrutiny committees have no decision making power and as such make recommendations to the Cabinet or Cabinet member, both Councils report that it is rare that the Cabinet does not accept the recommendations made by Scrutiny and only in exceptional cases would the Cabinet make a decision contrary to the Scrutiny recommendation.
- 5.3 In Kent County Council the scrutiny committees were re-titled 'cabinet committees' with a separate single scrutiny committee to deal with call-ins and task and finish work.
- 5.4 In Wandsworth London Borough Council the scrutiny committees were not renamed but their terms of reference were supplemented with the responsibility of reviewing all decisions prior to Cabinet decisions being made.
- 5.5 Notes of the advantages and disadvantages of the two governance systems are attached at appendix 1. It ought to be noted that the comments included within these tables are those taken direct from comments made at the meeting and do not represent the collective view of the Alternative Governance Working Group.

6. Proposals

- 6.1 The Alternative Governance Working Group met following their visits and agreed that:
 - (a) A more inclusive system of governance is preferred;
 - (b) Whilst there was no consensus of agreement on a proposed model, the majority of the Group favoured the Wandsworth model of governance as being more aligned to how Peterborough City Council operates; and
 - (c) Both the committee model and hybrid model ought to be presented to a wider audience of Peterborough members at an All Party Policy meeting in January and through the individual political group meetings. The Group can take views from members regarding their preferred option at these meetings.
- 6.2 Guest speakers from other Councils and Inlogov have been invited to the All Party Policy meeting in January 2015. The Alternative Governance Working Group will report back to Council by March 2015 on the outcome of these meetings with a view to formulating proposals for the member's preferred model of governance and a timetable for the work required to be undertaken in the next civic year.
- 6.3 The Alternative Governance Working Group is to reconvene in the new year to consider whether any further options for governance ought to be reviewed and whether any one single proposal was emerging as the Council wide preferred governance model.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 At this stage, none as there is no recommendation for change.

4. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)
None

The comments included within these tables are those taken direct from comments made by our hosts during visits by the Alternative Governance Working Group.

Alternative Governance Comparisons

Committee System (Cambridge and Norfolk)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Allows for engagement from back bench Councillors through Committee	Can be a cumbersome system not conducive to speedy decision making
Full Council more accountable for decision making	Additional meetings have had to be scheduled to make budget decisions
(Norfolk) Have Scrutiny Committee's for call-ins	Council is unable to overturn decisions made at Committee level.
Group representatives meet regularly to ensure policy development is delivered	(Norfolk) Chair is unable to be a member of the Policy and Resources Committee so their system is not as transparent as it might be
No one person can ratify an important decision	Urgent decisions can be difficult to obtain
Working Groups are kept to a minimum	If a party has a significant majority there is likely to be collegiate working. Groups will have majority on committees to force through decision making
Council scrutinises all decisions made at committee level	In-depth knowledge can be lost by having no Cabinet Member
Greater awareness of financial constraints amongst all members	Silo thinking is encouraged by the committee system
(Cambs) Vice Chair acts as the spokesperson for the group therefore increasing overall understanding of issues	No Public Questions
(Cambs) Less spent on Members Allowances since the introduction of Committee system	

Alternative Governance Comparisons

Hybrid System (Wandsworth and Kent)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Cuts out lengthy processes involved in a Committee system	May have an effect on number of meetings i.e. by increasing them
Allows for good engagement from back bench Councillors	May have an impact on support required but unsure at this time
Cabinet Committees as part of a Hybrid system allows discussion to take place prior to the Cabinet Member making a decision	Agendas for meetings can be long and detailed this can be an issue with respect to preparation and also for Members having enough time to read them
The Cabinet Member is still accountable for decision making	The Cabinet Member is still accountable for decision making
Less work for Scrutiny as all decision are make within the Cabinet Committees	(Kent) No public question time at Cabinet or Council Meetings
Allows all Councillors to be informed of decisions and debate on them	
If urgent decision is required an additional meeting can be called	
The current system has been streamlined meaning only relevant matters are discussed	
Allows for good debate within the Cabinet Committees	
Reduction in Call in's / Stop Notices	

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