

9. PROPOSED GOVERNANCE REVIEW: BRIEF AND MEMBER WORKING GROUP (SLF)

1. Purpose of the report

This report asks Members to approve the brief for the proposed governance review and appoint a Working Group to work with Officers in progressing this work.

2. Recommendations

- 1. To establish a Governance Review Working Group and appoint Members to the Group.**
- 2. To approve the terms of reference and scope as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 3. To confirm that attendance at meetings of the Working Group is an approved duty for the purpose of claiming travel and subsistence allowances.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. Our existing Code of Corporate Governance states that Governance is about how we ensure that we are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises of the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which we are directed and controlled and through which we account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead communities. Governance is more than making sure that things do not go wrong or fixing them if they do. Good governance adds value by ensuring effectiveness in ever changing circumstances.
4. The 2017/18 Annual Assurance report from our Internal Auditor stated “the overall opinion of the Head of Internal Audit on the framework of governance, risk management and control operating in the Authority is that it provides Substantial Assurance. There are no significant control weaknesses which in the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit need to be considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement”.
5. In July this year the Authority’s External Auditors reviewed the Authority’s Annual Governance Statement, giving the highest assessment of a satisfactory conclusion with no issues and agreed that the Authority’s arrangements were fit for purpose and established in accordance with the principles of good governance as recommended by the CIPFA/SOLACE (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’.
6. However there is an expectation that the Authority will periodically review its Code of Corporate Governance and the review proposed in this report with contribute to this process. The review will be carried out in the context of our Vision and Mission and will follow the 7 key principles that underpin the Authority’s ways of working.

Background Information

7. The suggestion for this review has arisen from recent informal discussions between Members and Officers indicating a desire from Members for exploring ways in which the Authority’s existing governance arrangements can be enhanced.

8. A draft brief for the Working Group was discussed at a meeting of the Members' Forum held on 5 October 2018 where there was widespread support for the proposal. The proposals at Appendix 1 take account of comments made at that discussion.
9. Some of the issues that have been raised include:
 - Are the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers clear?
 - Are the current delegations to Committees and the list of matters reserved to meetings of the Authority right?
 - Could the Authority have more effective and efficient ways of involving Members in developing policy and informing them of other decisions made? and do Standing Orders or Codes need amending to facilitate this?
 - How can Members be proactively involved in getting items discussed?
 - Is the current level of delegation to Officers right? and could the structure of the Scheme of Delegation be improved to make it clearer?
 - What are the aims of the current Member representative scheme? How effective is it in delivering its objectives?

Proposals

10. It is proposed that :
 - A Member Working Group is appointed to progress this work working with relevant Officers (the Leadership Team lead will be the Chief Executive). To date expressions of interest have been received from four Secretary of State Members, Mr J Berresford, Cllr P Brady, Cllr A McCloy and Mr K Smith, and two Local Authority Members Cllr C Furness and Cllr B Woods.
 - the brief for the task team as given in Appendix 1 is discussed and agreed.
11. The Working Group will project plan its work at its first meeting, but the timeline and key milestones will include:
 - Confirming how the Working Group will operate including the frequency of meetings.
 - Identifying what data needs to be collected to inform options including seeking ideas from all Members through the forthcoming Member survey.
 - Consideration on whether a Member workshop with an external facilitator would be an appropriate mechanism to engage all Members and the timing of this intervention.
 - A target date of reporting to the May 2019 Authority meeting on initial proposals with a view to implementation following the July 2019 Annual Meeting.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

12. As this significant piece of work was not part of the 2018/19 work programme additional resources will be required to support the review and the Working Group and to implement the recommendations following Authority approval. These additional costs

can be met from with the existing Corporate Strategy and Development Directorate budget. As well as the additional Officer support the Authority will also incur additional unplanned travel and subsistence costs of approximately £130 for each meeting of the Working Group if meetings are held on days when meetings or workshops are not already scheduled. As the Authority currently has two vacancies it is anticipated that this can be met within the existing budget. Additional funding would need to be identified if an external facilitator is appointed.

Risk Management:

13. The Working Group will identify risks to achieving expected outcomes and how to mitigate these as part of its work.

Sustainability:

14. There are no sustainability issues to highlight.

Equality:

15. There are no significant equality issues relating to setting up the working group. However in developing proposals the Working Group will need to consider how they may impact on the 9 protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources:

16. There are no significant Human Resources issues as, subject to the financial considerations set out above, the Working Group can be supported by existing employees.

17. **Background papers (not previously published)**

None

18. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Draft Terms of Reference and Scope of the Governance Review Working Group.

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive, 29 November 2018