

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERS' DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Constitution and Members' Development Committee was held on Thursday 19 December 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors J Rostron (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), I Blades, I Morrish and N Walker

OFFICERS: C Jones, C Pattinson and A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors L Hurst, P Storey, G Wilson and J Young

23/6 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

23/7 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

23/8 **MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION AND MEMBER'S DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 27 JUNE 2024**

The minutes of the Constitution and Member's Development Committee meeting held on 27 June 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

23/9 **GOVERNANCE SUPPORT AND THE CONSTITUTION REFRESH**

A report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services was presented that updated the Committee on progress towards reviewing and updating the constitution following the adoption of a revised Constitution in May 2023.

Members were provided with the background of the Council's improvement journey and governance arrangements. During 2022/23 a series of reports were presented to full Council, which set out the Phase 1 and 2 approaches to the Council's corporate governance improvement plan. The plans were put in place to address the corporate governance concerns identified by Ernst and Young (EY), the Council's External Auditor, on the Annual Audit Results Report, and considered by Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee on 22 July 2022.

Phase One of the improvement journey involved CIPFA being commissioned to provide an independent review of the Council's culture and governance. Phase Two of the governance improvement journey focused on gathering evidence from officers and Members.

On 24 January 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) issued a Best Value Notice against the Council. This was formal notification that DLUHC had concerns about the Council in relation to:

- Serious concerns highlighted by the external auditor, published in July 2022, around governance arrangements; and
- Cultural and governance issues further investigated in the CIPFA review published in September 2022.

On 18 September 2023, Council received a report that set out the activities of Phase Three of the proposed Corporate Governance Improvement Plan, alongside the associated governance arrangements providing oversight of delivery. It also received a report from the Council's External Auditors which made statutory recommendations in relation to the Council's governance. On 16 October 2024, Council received a report updating it on the progress made against the action plan put in place in response to the report, as well as an update on delivery against the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan.

The Constitution and Member's Development Committee were advised that a Locum

Governance Solicitor had been recruited to focus on refreshing the Constitution to ensure that it was accurate and current and to update the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

The Locum Governance Solicitor gave a presentation that covered the Constitution Review Process and Scheme of Delegation Review.

The Committee were asked to note the additional support secured to assist with governance and the steps taken to refresh the Constitution and to consider and provide input into the proposed amendments to the Constitution.

A discussion took place in respect of the Constitution, and it was clarified that the work to be undertaken is a reorganisation of the Constitution to remove duplication. The following was noted:

- A Constitution Working Group is to be established, with Group Leaders nominating Members.
- Questionnaires are to be provided to members on discrete parts of the constitution.
- A Constitution and Member's Development Committee meeting is to be held in advance of the report being provided to Executive for comment.
- Upon Executive consideration, the Constitution and Member Development Committee will recommend the report to Full Council in April.

ORDERED that the information was received and noted.

23/10

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, CAN BE CONSIDERED

None.