

APPENDIX A

Review of Governance Arrangements

Report of the Governance Development Group



Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Background	Page 3
Reasons for review	Page 5
Legislative context	Page 6
Process and evidence	Page 7
Conclusions	Page 12
Financial Considerations	Page 15
Other Considerations	Page 16
Recommendations	Page 16
Appendices	

Introduction

Governance can be defined as ‘the action, manner, or system of governing’. Good governance and decision making is key to how the community engage with the council, how the council is perceived and how we deliver for our communities.

The “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)/ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) 2007)” states that “Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner .”

In recent years there has been a notable shift towards the public expecting efficient, transparent and accountable decision making and if we are going to continue to improve the services that we provide to Melton residents it is important that the Council satisfies that desire.

Local Authorities also have to consider commercialism as a way of self supporting our finances and to do this we need to ensure that our governance arrangements allow us to support our ambitions.

Following a Corporate Peer Review conducted in December 2017, we began a journey of understanding how we make decisions and how we can better support the Councils ambitions through improved decision making.

We identified the following points as the most successful drivers in any governance structure.

- How publically accountable members are
- How members lead the organisation
- How engaged residents feel in decision making
- How we challenge and scrutinise decisions
- How quickly we can make decisions

We met with Councils throughout the country that had adopted different models of governance and also asked stakeholders and residents for their opinions on how we make decisions and how we can improve it in line with our objectives.

One of our main learning points was that one governance system is not inherently better or worse than the other however the choice of system has to be right for the Council right now. We want to be more commercial, we have had the results of the Peer Review and we want to focus on the projects that are important for our community. Now is the right time to reshape the Council to support Melton’s ambitions.

We would like to thank the councils, stakeholders and the public for their input into our review.

Background

Following the LGA Peer Challenge held in December 2017 a report and list of recommendations together with an Action Plan were accepted by Council on 22 February 2018. One of the recommendations was to improve the Council's governance and decision making arrangements. The Local Government Association carried out a further review of this aspect between 12 and 14 March 2018, and the LGA report was considered by the Governance Committee at its meeting on 27 March 2018.

At that meeting the Governance Committee supported the establishment of an informal member/officer group, subsequently named the 'Governance Development Group', and tasked it with bringing forward proposals to both strengthen and streamline the current committee structure, while at the same time creating a clearer route for policy development.

Following the feedback from the LGA Governance Review held in March 2018, and the subsequent work of the Governance Development Group, on 8 May 2018, the Council approved the first phase of proposals which sought to streamline and improve the Council's governance arrangements.

On 8 May 2018, members approved the continuation of the Governance Development Group to review the Council's governance arrangements and consider the merits of alternative governance models and report to the Governance Committee and subsequently the Full Council in due course.

The Governance Development Group membership comprised:

- Councillor Joe Orson
- Councillor Ronnie De Burle
- Councillor Alison Freer-Jones
- Councillor Tom Greenow
- Councillor John Illingworth

The following officers supported the group during its investigations:

- Edd De Coverley (Chief Executive Officer)
- Adele Wylie (Director for Legal and Democratic Services)
- Sarah Evans (Senior Democracy Officer)

Reasons for the Review

Melton Borough Council has operated the committee system for a number of years. During this period there have been changes to committees and the governance structure and the most recent changes were approved by Council in April 2018.

One of the key recommendations from the Peer Group was that we needed *"Stable and consistent decision making to provide confidence in delivery"*.

Key findings are shown below.

“In some areas it was unclear which committee had final ownership of policy-making and decision-making, with the effect that recommendations can go to multiple committees before decisions are made and outcomes are known. It is important that members have the ability to make accurate and timely decisions, and greater clarity on governance/decision-making structures would minimise delay. It would also increase transparency as it would be clearer where decision-making power vested – helping members concentrate their contributions to ‘the debate’ rather than seeing the same decision debated multiple times. Members must have confidence in their ability to make strategic decisions and be assured that their decisions provide the necessary clarity of purpose to allow officers to deliver”

“Clarity around the journey and speed of decision-making and policy formulation at the council would improve the ability to deliver. There have been some changes to the way councillors discuss issues through the committee Chairs’ meeting, however there remains more to do in engaging the rest of the councillor community more effectively. This would help remove the risk of blockage or delay through the various committees through whom the decision-making process appears to be repeated. The present system is raising concerns among staff and partners about the council’s ability to make decisions in a timely way. This appears to be impacting negatively on the council’s ability to do its business in a transparent, timely and agile fashion.”

“Stable and consistent decision making to provide confidence in delivery: In some areas it was unclear which committee had final ownership of policy-making and decision-making, with the effect that recommendations can go to multiple committees before decisions are made and outcomes are known. It is important that members have the ability to make accurate and timely decisions, and greater clarity on governance/decision-making structures would minimise delay. It would also increase transparency as it would be clearer where decision-making power vested – helping members concentrate their contributions to ‘the debate’ rather than seeing the same decision debated multiple times. Members must have confidence in their ability to make strategic decisions and be assured that their decisions provide the necessary clarity of purpose to allow officers to deliver.”

Legislative Context

Until the passing of the Local Government Act 2000 (‘the 2000 Act’), local government in England operated under a committee system model of governance. The 2000 Act required Councils to replace their committee systems and develop separate executive and scrutiny functions. Councils were required to consult local stakeholders and propose one of three types of arrangements for future council governance:

- Directly elected mayor and an Executive appointed by the mayor
- Council leader appointed by the Executive with the Executive appointed either by the council or the leader

- Directly elected mayor and council manager (this model was later withdrawn in the 2007 Act, so is now no longer an option)

There was a 'fourth option' only open to district councils with populations of less than 85,000, which involved continuing with a committee system. This "fourth option" enabled Melton to remain with the committee system. Since the Localism Act 2011, this option is now available to all councils.

Alternative Governance Models available

Leader and Cabinet

Leader with executive delegations

This is the governance system that most councils operate. In some councils, individual members of the Cabinet have decision-making powers; in others, decisions have to be made by the whole Cabinet. The Cabinet is led by a leader, who is elected by Council for a term determined by the council itself or on a four yearly basis (and will usually be the leader of the largest party on the council). These councils must have at least one overview and scrutiny committee. The Cabinet comprises a group of no more than ten councillors and is responsible for executive functions, with the remaining councillors responsible for setting the budget and policy framework within which the Cabinet must operate, supporting policy development, and scrutinising the performance of the Cabinet.

Strong Leader

Under this model, the leader elected by the Council appoints up to nine other councillors to the Cabinet (including a deputy leader) and determines their respective areas of responsibility. The Leader is responsible for the discharge of all executive functions within the council and can choose how to discharge those functions.

The Committee System

Committee system councils make most decisions in committees, which are made up of a mix of councillors from all political parties. These councils may have one or more overview and scrutiny committees but are not required to. Melton previously had a Scrutiny Committee but this was abolished as it was not considered effective at the time.

Council delegates its functions to committees as determined by the council. Councils can be flexible in how they design their committee structure and Melton has used this flexibility in the past year.

Hybrid arrangements

There are variations for each of these models that can lead councils to adopt hybrid approaches; typically, this is a hybrid between Leader and Executive model and the committee system. Councils also have the option of suggesting an approach of their own to the Secretary of State. Most hybrid systems adopt a Cabinet, Scrutiny but also have Cabinet Advisory Boards which act as committees recommending items to the Cabinet.

Process and Evidence

Phase One

The LGA Governance Review Feedback report identified that the first step to be taken by the council was to improve the existing committee structure, its operation and that of the associated boards and groups.

Key Issues were;

“How and where policy is developed across the council is not clear to members, officers or to us as external observers.”

“It is very clear that members have a strong focus on governance being very inclusive, and this extends to the engagement and involvement of the two opposition members on the council. Undoubtedly some members feel very strongly about continuing to be very inclusive, yet the extent of the inclusion and involvement gives an impression that the council’s leadership is widely dispersed. This creates problems for officers in determining who is in charge and who should be consulted across the membership, and seems to involve senior officers regularly having to consult a wide number of members on an individual basis. It also causes frustration for some councillors. Even when policy discussions are held with lead members in advance, the involvement of significant numbers of members, sometimes across multiple committees, leads to uncertainty about whether a recommendation will be supported or not. This leads to the potential to generate lots of work which becomes unrealised or abortive, and which further exacerbates capacity issues”

“There are overlaps between the committees and examples of the same issue being bounced across committees. It is not clear whether this is because the remit of each committee is fully understood, or whether there is an unwillingness to make a decision. There is much inclusivity but less apparent ownership from some councillors.”

“Overall the council’s governance arrangements need a radical approach. Although what happens now may feel comfortable for members, the system feels archaic and out of kilter with other councils and how they operate.”

“Senior members in chairing roles, by virtue of being in those roles, have a responsibility to take a lead in developing policy for their committees. This includes engaging with officers to discuss emerging issues, as well as taking a lead within the group, and being accountable for ideas as they develop into policy”

Members agreed that that the ‘policy’ committees would be replaced by three committees; People Committee, Place Committee and Corporate Committee. These committees would replace the Community and Social Affairs (CSA), Melton Economic and Environmental Affairs (MEEA), Policy, Finance and Administration (PFA) and Town Area Committees respectively, and have equal standing.

The Joint Staff Working Group and the Melton Local Development Plan Working Group were the only working groups that would remain to reduce the amount of sub structures. These would be advisory in nature.

As it was recognised that there was no informal policy development route prior to discussion and debate at a formal committee meeting, and no place where competing ideas or options were weighed against each other a Policy Forum was created, comprising of the chairs and vice chairs of the three policy committees; which would automatically include the Leader and Deputy Leader, and would be supported by relevant senior officers. A similar forum for the chairs and vice chairs of the regulatory committees was also created, where matters affecting the regulatory functions could be considered. These were advisory meetings only.

Phase Two

Since the first phase was completed, the Governance Development Group has met on a regular basis to undertake its work in readiness for an Extraordinary Council on 21st November 2019.

We agreed that we needed to understand what was important for Melton and what we wanted the outcome to be for any governance arrangement before we could design a model which would deliver the outcomes. The outcomes were identified as;

- To ensure public accountability with clearly identified responsibilities for members
- To increase engagement with stakeholders and the public
- To ensure that there is effective review and challenge of our decisions
- To make quicker decisions when needed

We conducted our research into how other councils were achieving their outcomes by completing desk based exercises, reflecting on local experiences and visiting/communicating with councils throughout the country.

We felt that an analysis of other councils who had made changes to their governance system would give a wide-ranging view of the issues and challenges experienced by them and the solutions they introduced or considered.

We resolved to engage in the widest possible way with all those who may be working in or affected by decisions made by the Council.

It was agreed that we would undertake the following consultations;

- Invite various stakeholders to present to us their thoughts on how we make decisions and what is important to them
- To visit/communicate with other councils who had looked at the issues around governance change
- Public consultation through an online anonymous survey (this was also provided in hard copy to the "Seniors Day" participants)

We also reviewed a number of documents relating to good governance framework, including

Good governance in Local Government framework (SOLACE/CIPFA - 2007)

- Changing governance arrangements- Policy Briefing 4 (Centre for Public Scrutiny – December 2010)
- Musical chairs - Practical issues for local authorities in moving to a committee system (Centre for Public Scrutiny – April 2012)
- Rethinking governance - Practical steps for councils considering changes to their governance arrangements (Local Government Association – January 2014)

External Stakeholder Engagement – 21 September 2018

We invited some parish councils representatives and some members of the Town and Place Partnership to a focus group to understand their views on how we make decisions and how well they feel engaged in the decision making process.

Six stakeholders attended the workshop. The stakeholders agreed what they believed to be good governance and identified the following key leaning points;

- All stakeholders agreed that transparency was key to good governance. This is both in terms of what decisions we make and the processes that underpin those decisions.
- There was some concern about the amount of committees making decisions and there wasn't clarity over which committee/councillor made which decision.
- There was a lack of understanding on the current governance structure and Councillors roles in making decisions.
- Ward Councillors should have a role in decision making within their ward.
- There should be a mechanism for scrutiny within decision making, although this should not be open to abuse. If members are to scrutinise decisions, they need the power to take action otherwise it is pointless. It wasn't felt that there was adequate checks and balances in current decision making.
- The Council should be able to make decisions quickly whether this is through formal meetings or by a core group of lead Councillors who can make decisions. Leadership was considered to be important.

The stakeholders also provided views which were useful as we try to improve engagement with the community which will be considered by officers outside of the review.

Public Questionnaire

An online survey was issued on 31st September 2018 and closed on 4th October 2018. There were 98 responses in total. Interestingly 47% of people who responded had attended a meeting of the council and therefore are engaged in decision making within the Borough. The key learning points are identified from the results (full results are attached at Appendix One).

The results identify that the public can not find decisions easily, do not know which Councillors/ Committees are responsible for specific issues/make which decisions or understand councillors roles in decision making.

Over 80% of responses agreed;

- There is a strong appetite for streamed meetings

- The way the council makes decisions isn't open and transparent
- It is important that the council can make quick decisions where it needs to
- There isn't effective scrutiny of decisions
- That they do not feel that there is the opportunity to inform and influence decision making
- Ward Councillors should be consulted about decisions within their local community
- Decisions taken about the Borough should be taken locally

The most important elements of the council's decision making were considered to be;

- Accountability of councillors
- Communication and meaningful engagement with the community and stakeholders
- Effective scrutiny of decisions being made

External advice – Local Government Association

We sought the advice and guidance of Judith Hurcombe (Programme Manager at the Local Government Association) at the beginning of this process. Judith has been involved in many Local Government issues and has worked with councils who are reviewing their governance arrangements.

Judith advised that identical systems will operate differently in different councils due to variables such as the size of the majority party, the culture of the leadership, and the perceived public engagement in decision-making. Changing a council's governance structure does not, in itself, make the organisation more open to engagement. Judith provided the Group with some research of councils which operate different models of governance and who had also been on a journey to better understand their decision making.

Visits to Councils

We agreed to visit a number of other councils (or skype them in some instances) with different governance models; we agreed that it was important that we understood all of the alternative governance structures and how they worked at each Council. We used a standard set of questions and asked supplemental questions as necessary. It became very clear from the people we met that each council had its own character and that there would not be a 'one size fits all' solution.

Any council has a context, culture and style of its own, and governance has to be created to fit their specific dynamic.

We decided to visit Newark and Sherwood District Council (which had changed from Cabinet to a Committee system in 2013), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (as it had adopted a 'hybrid' leader and executive structure in 2012), Charnwood Borough Council (which had changed to a Cabinet system in 2000) and South Gloucestershire County Council (which had changed from a Committee system to Cabinet in 2017). South Gloucestershire had adopted the committee model from 2012-2017 and before that they had operated under a Cabinet model and so have experience of both the Cabinet and Committee models of governance.

Newark and Sherwood District Council – 16 August 2018

With the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, Councils had the option to review existing governance arrangements and move to a Committee model. At this time Newark & Sherwood was operating a Cabinet model and there was a belief that the committee system was more democratic as it engaged all members/political groups in decision making. Their political make up was fairly evenly balanced.

A Committee structure was approved in 2011 and a thorough review of the proposed new arrangements was undertaken and a new decision-making structure was designed. There are 3 operational committees and the usual regulatory committees which cover planning and licensing. In addition there is a Policy and Finance Committee of seven Members which replicates the role of a Cabinet in that it covers all strategic decisions and the implementation of the policy framework. A system of reservation for any three members to refer any decision to the Council is also in place and is currently not misused. There is no longer an overview and scrutiny committee but each committee embeds overview and scrutiny principles. It is accepted that Scrutiny is not as effective as it needs to be.

There are regular meetings with Lead members and officers of matters coming up and to set committee agendas etc. Group communications are a priority and there are monthly group meetings, before each committee cycle and before each Council meeting. The Leader aims to gain support on new ideas before it gets to committee via Officer Briefings, group meetings, etc and they are conscious that this type of communication makes stronger decisions. There is strong ambassadorial leadership by the Chairs which is recognised across the groups.

Overall most of Newark and Sherwood's members prefer the Committee model and feel more involved in decision-making. It is acknowledged that decision making can be slower than the previous Cabinet structure and there is some duplication as decisions have to go from operational committees to the Policy and Finance Committee.

Charnwood Borough Council – 22 August 2018

Charnwood is an advocate of the Cabinet model and took up the opportunity to operate in this way as soon as it was offered by legislation in 2000. They have a Leader and a 10 member Cabinet. Although the Leader has the executive power to do so, he has not delegated decisions to other members of the Cabinet and the Cabinet as a body makes all the decisions. Non-Cabinet members are involved in Scrutiny, Planning, Licensing etc. Ideas from backbenchers are routed to a Cabinet member or to a Scrutiny Chair/Board. Group meetings are quarterly.

There is strong communication between Cabinet members and officers and initial policy ideas arise from weekly informal briefing meetings with Cabinet members. Also informal 'forward programme' meetings are held monthly where Cabinet members and key officers discuss upcoming Cabinet agenda items.

Charnwood has recently had a review of its scrutiny arrangements and they are currently working through the recommendations. There is a facility for the Scrutiny Group to scrutinise policy under development and the Overview Scrutiny Group can select items for pre-decision scrutiny before

each Cabinet meeting. Cabinet agendas, strategies and policies are regularly sent to the Scrutiny Chairs to consider. They are looking to use Scrutiny as a way of gaining community value in their decision making.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – 23 August 2018

The 'hybrid' system established by Tunbridge Wells involved three Cabinet Advisory Boards (CABs) to consider all the items on the Council's Forward Plan prior to final decision by Cabinet, with a provision for taking urgent items. The CABs are chaired by a Cabinet member, as it was felt that this encourages lead councillors to take greater responsibility for decisions. The CABs afforded an opportunity for non Cabinet members to scrutinise and shape matters before formal consideration by Cabinet. Tunbridge Wells has one Overview and Scrutiny committee, chaired by a councillor from the majority group, which scrutinises issues raised by councillors, often related to the wider Borough.

Backbenchers felt more informed and engaged with the new system. They benefited from a programme of member information sessions, which deliver 1-2 briefings each month on topical or key projects. Officers are expected to advise relevant ward councillors in advance of events in their localities and keep them informed. Communication and transparency with residents was seen to improve, aided by regular meetings with key stakeholders such as the chairmen of Parish Councils and the Town Forum to notify them about the Council's business and receive feedback.

South Gloucestershire County Council – 29 August 2018

South Gloucestershire moved to a Cabinet model from Committees in 2017. They had operated committees for 5 years from 2012-2017 and pre-2012 had had a Cabinet. The key reason for the latest change was due to speed of decision making. Whilst operating the Committee system it was felt that some of the big decisions were delayed because it was too difficult to get things done. Ofsted criticised the negative impact of their committee system and has subsequently praised the effectiveness of their Cabinet system. There is quite often pre-scrutiny which may slow things down but they are keen on a wide member engagement. Scrutiny chairs are often involved in discussions on pre-policy review and it is felt that due to this engagement, call in has not been used in the last year.

With regard to inclusivity of the committee model, it was felt that the perception was not the reality and during their time using this model there had been a significant transfer of power from members to officers due to decision making being difficult and therefore more officer delegations being undertaken. Also only the members on relevant committees could have a say on an issue whereas with the Cabinet model any member can feed in views to the Portfolio Holder or there could be involvement through Scrutiny or task and finish development groups. It was noted that the opposition may not feel as engaged as those in the ruling group.

The Leader and Portfolio Holders are able to make executive decisions and it was felt strongly that this meant more decisions were now taken by members rather than officers. The Cabinet model also allowed decisions to be taken more quickly. South Gloucestershire also specifically referred to a view that the public were clearer on who was responsible for decisions and issues and the Cabinet way of working enabled issues to be resolved more quickly.

Conclusions

As set out in previous sections of this report, the Governance Development Group has undertaken extensive research and consultation on the principles of good governance and potential decision-making structures. The proposals set out in this section of the report seek to meet the key points which the Group believe contribute to successful decision making and address the issues within our own system.

Review of our Committee System

The Group is clear that any form of governance model has strengths and weaknesses. Perceived disadvantages of the committee system include:

- widely considered to be inefficient, slow in decision-making and overly focused on operational matters rather than policy and results;
- hard to know who is responsible for decisions (accountability questioned);
- committees could avoid taking responsibility for difficult decisions; and
- Decision making can't be taken by individual members outside of formal meetings therefore organisations become more officer led.
- Cross cutting issues

The Group recognises that the above disadvantages are apparent in our own decision making structure and we need to improve these if we are to achieve our corporate priorities. We note the following issues within our current governance arrangement;

- Councillors feel disengaged with the decision-making process;
- Councillors, officer and the public do not have a high level of understanding of which Committee can make which decisions. Indeed there have been issues in recent months where the policy decision is made in one Committee and the budget decision is made in another which doesn't allow effective decision making or scrutiny.
- Chairs do not have the power to make decisions and are not viewed as leaders within the organisation; this can make the organisation seem officer led.
- Decision making can be slow and waiting for the next Committee cycle can delay important decisions.
- There are inadequate check and balances of decisions made.
- The officer delegation scheme is not used effectively due to Chairs not having the authority to make the decision with them.
- There is inadequate engagement with the public and stakeholders and little opportunity for them to influence decision making in policy decisions.

What we want to achieve and the right governance arrangements to achieve them

When we started our journey we were all keen to explore the hybrid model of governance. However we all agreed that whilst it provided the benefits of both the Committee System and the Leader and Cabinet model, it was incredibly resource intensive. It also appeared to be slow and bureaucratic. Whilst it may work within other Councils, we did not feel that it would be an appropriate fit for Melton.

After we discounted the hybrid model, we reviewed whether the Committee System or the Leader and Cabinet model would be the best model for Melton right now.

The Group does not believe that the Committee system will provide us with the right structure to achieve the Council's strategic vision. We have streamlined the structure recently and the structure is still not allowing us to move at the speed and with the checks and balances we need to achieve our ambitions.

The Group believes that the best way of improving our decision making to achieve our ambitions is to consider adopting the Leader and Cabinet arrangements, whilst ensuring that measures to improve decision making processes and inclusiveness are adopted through informal processes.

The Group's reasoning linked to the objectives identified at the start of the Phase Two is provided below;

1. Make quicker decisions where we need to.

The inability for councillors to take delegated decisions restricts when decisions can be made. We are therefore a slave to the Committee cycle. Unless we are to increase the amount of Committees, the Committee system will not allow us to make decisions as quickly as we need. To increase the amount of Committees would have an impact on resources and would therefore create a financial impact, this would not present value for money.

The Group believes that the Leader and Cabinet model would provide quicker decisions both in terms of decisions made in formal meetings and Portfolio Holders having the authority to take decisions outside of meetings if required. As is shown below, the number of meetings would not increase from the amount currently in place and therefore there would be no cost implications.

2. Having more checks, balances and review in decision making

The Group is very clear that effective scrutiny is a vital part of the Council's wider system of checks and balances and believes that a Scrutiny Committee would ensure adequate scrutiny of decisions which our current system doesn't. There is no route within our current structure to scrutinise the decisions of Committees and it is unrealistic to think that members will scrutinise itself as it makes the decisions within Committees.

We need to hold decision makers to account and pre scrutinise important matters.

Whilst a Scrutiny Committee could be built into our current system, it would mean an additional allowance to a Chair and additional meetings which would have financial implications.

If the Leader and Cabinet model was adopted, we envisage that one Scrutiny Committee would be established to ensure proper checks and balances and that the Cabinet are held to account. The Scrutiny Committee would have a degree of autonomy to decide what matters it should consider and they could also set up their own panels or working groups to look at specific issues as and when required. Cabinet members would have to regularly attend Scrutiny Committee to answer questions on their relevant portfolios to ensure that they were being held to account.

Whilst the detail of how the Scrutiny Committee would operate, including its composition, would be a matter for the new Council to determine. We envisage that their role would not only be scrutinising decisions that had been made but also pre-scrutinising important Cabinet matters, thereby informing decisions taken by the Cabinet.

Dependent on the matter, this may involve consideration of a discussion paper at a very early stage in respect of a major issue and/or a draft report prior to its formal consideration by the Cabinet. We would also envisage the Scrutiny Committees playing a vital role in budget preparation.

3. Increase engagement with stakeholders and the public

We do not believe that there is adequate public engagement with decision making and the current model can not easily be explained. For example, it is difficult to understand that a substantive issue can be decided by one committee but the finances will be dealt with by another committee. Public consultation made it clear that there was little awareness of which Committee dealt with which issues. We believe that this would be simpler with the Leader and Cabinet model as the roles are more clearly defined.

We also believe that if managed effectively, a Scrutiny Committee would bridge the gap between local communities and the council. Where residents and stakeholders are unsure about how they can influence decision making, they would be able to be involved through task and finish groups and have an active input in the Scrutiny workplan. It is accepted that the Leader and Cabinet model would not work if Scrutiny was not effective.

The Committee could also seek to use Scrutiny as a forum for public engagement in matters of local concern.

4. Improve public accountability with clearly identified responsibilities for members;

Within the current system, the public are not clear about the role of members and how they influence decision making. This is as a direct result of the Committees not being understood. We believe that within a Leader and Cabinet model as Portfolio Holders would have the authority to make decisions and advocate them to the public there would be more public accountability. We would therefore envisage Portfolio Holders taking an active part in promotion of policies and decisions within their portfolios which the Chairs within our current system do not currently do.

Within our current processes we recognise that we do not consult with ward members enough on local issues. Whilst we can improve our current processes to ensure that report authors routinely inform and record the comments of local ward members, the current system does not require us to do so. We believe that it would be more important to record the ward councillors views in a Leader and Cabinet model as they may not be the decision makers and Cabinet members would not want to make decisions without considering the local viewpoint.

Where officers currently make delegated decisions there is less requirement to record or publish them. Whilst we do this voluntarily, if the Leader and Cabinet model was adopted, this would be a requirement and we would the need to consult with Ward members on local decisions before implementing them.

Financial Considerations

The Group recognises that in order to ensure effective overview and scrutiny they must be supported by a Scrutiny Officer. Officers should seek to understand the cost of resourcing this post effectively and note that this would form part of the centralisation of the Democratic Services function.

Meetings in current structure	Number of Meetings annually	Meetings in recommended structure	Number of Meetings annually
Council	7	Council	7
Place Committee	5	Cabinet	10
People Committee	5	Scrutiny Committee	5
Corporate Committee	5	Governance Committee	5
Governance Committee	5	Planning Committee	16
Planning Committee	16	Licensing Committee	5
Licensing Committee	5		
TOTAL	48	TOTAL	48

Other Considerations

The Group considered whether the Planning Committee and Licensing and Regulatory Committee could become one committee. It is not recommended however to proceed with this at the current time and therefore there will be no recommendations to change the structures of the regulatory committees.

Recommendations

It is recommended that in order to ensure that the Councils governance structure helps to deliver the Councils ambitions;

- The Council change its governance structure to a Leader and Cabinet model of governance
- That one Scrutiny Committee be established which would not only scrutinise decisions but have a role in policy development where required
- That consultation with Ward members would be a formal part of any decision making
- That the statutory/regulatory committees are not changed from the current structure

END