

### **An Extract of the Discussion Paper considered by the Constitution Working Group at its meeting on 1st April 2025**

Reviewing the draft recommendations, they are presented as:

- (1) some preparatory and foundational recommendations for consideration by Cabinet; and
- (2) key structural considerations for discussion which would require a change to decision-making structures/the Constitution

#### **SECTION 1**

Areas for consideration/direction by Cabinet

- 1) Confirming non-executive members' roles in policy development** in a way that is tightly informed by the Financial Resilience Plan and wider Council planning work.
  - use of cross-party Cabinet Working Groups
  - Portfolio Holder accountability to OSC to enhance political oversight
- 2) A framework for non-executive member assurance – Quality of Information and Data to support decisions needs to improve** regularly produced information on performance, finance and risk to share regularly with members – what information, level of detail, how shared.
- 3) Approach to ensuring Members are informed and sighted on important matters** – briefings, circulation of documents with an eye to members' non-executive roles.

#### **SECTION 2**

**Key structural changes for discussion**

##### **4) The future of PPAB**

The Review proposed the abolition of PPAB, and instead re-organising committee bodies.

However, at the Members workshop, views were expressed that Cabinet had not used PPAB in the way that it was originally intended for policy development and that it was an option to improve PPAB instead of abolishing the body. The original theory underpinning PPAB and OSC was sound. There were some concerns that OSC would not have capacity to adopt PPAB's policy development role.

**To consider retaining an improved Policy and Project Advisory Board and put in place provisions which would strengthen the terms of reference.**

Cabinet takes the lead in initiating policy and policy development. To enable PPAB to operate more effectively on formal policy development means taking measures to improve how PPAB intersects with Cabinet. The review found that PPAB's role in policy development does not link especially closely to the content of the Council Plan.

Proposals which may strengthen PPAB terms of reference:

- Requirement to have a clear and visible work programme, held by a single overarching Progress Group with a coordinating role across all work plans for PPAB, OSC and CGAS.
- Requirement for work programming to engage with Cabinet and linked to the Council Plan priorities
- Clarifying PPAB's role to consider policy proposals when they have already been partly-formulated by Cabinet – with the emphasis on supporting policy development by looking at how the policy is framed e.g. Demand and need from residents, pressures and constraints, risks and other strategic factors. The focus could be on the highest profile/contentious issues.
- The overarching Progress Group expected to reference the forward Cabinet Work Programme – with programmed activity for the following 6 to 12 months ahead
- Time limited Working Groups expected to engage with Portfolio Holder

## **5) Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Review proposed integrating the roles of non-executive members in the terms of reference – as a body with a clear focus on performance review, policy review and review of financial matters.

At the Members workshop, it was suggested that performance review should be more inward focused on the organisation's performance, rather than external. Scrutiny to focus on an enhanced performance plan. Clarity of different roles on finance, between O&S and Audit and Governance to be reflected in the terms of reference.

Task and Finish Groups enable more freedom to Members to carry out in-depth reviews – but should 'finish'. There was also support for improved co-ordination of work programmes with other committee bodies to avoid duplication.

**Proposed to make some adjustments to the OSC terms of reference to reflect the key responsibilities of non-executive members – no reduction to scheduled OSC meetings.**

## **6) Future of CGAS**

The Review advised that the CGAS Committee responsibilities were too broad and that a new Audit and Governance Committee should be established.

At the Member Workshop, there was support for separating out the corporate business functions from governance and audit functions, and training support is needed for Audit.

Members taking part in Licensing Hearings must be drawn from the Licensing Committee. Members on a Corporate Business and Licensing Committee must have a large proportion of members who would be available for training and attending licensing hearings.

**To consider splitting the current terms of reference for CGAS across two new Committees – (1) ‘Audit and Governance Committee’ (meeting six times a year) and a second committee covering all the remaining Corporate Business and Licensing functions (meeting three times a year). (Licensing Hearings are held throughout the year as needed – once the membership has been appointed by the Licensing Committee).**

## **7) A Single Progress Group to align work programmes**

The Review recommends a single Progress Group, appointed to and accountable to the Corporate Business Committee. The Membership of a Progress Group can be drawn from the across the Council.

This would be a business management space for non-executive activity, tasked to ensure that committees, collectively, are able to effectively carry out the five duties/roles of non-executive members as in the introduction above.

**To consider a new single Progress Group to:**

- **Align work programmes of the non-exec bodies, OSC, PPAB and Corporate Governance and Audit**
- **Prioritise business relating to the five non-executive roles**
- **Developing work programmes taking into account Cabinet business, Financial Resilience Working Group, key financial and risk register information, and performance data.**
- **Co-ordinate a new Member Development Plan for Non-Executive Members framed around the five non-executive roles reflecting a new focus for engagement with Portfolio Holders. This to include training to support the Audit Committee.**

**Membership can be drawn from across the Council – views on make-up of the body**