

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

CHANGE TO GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Council about the provisions of the Localism Act that allow authorities to change from the executive system of governance to the committee system.
2. To seek approval to develop proposals and inform the public and partners.

Information and Advice

3. The Localism Act (the Act) was introduced on 15 November 2011. The aim of the Act is to improve freedoms and flexibility for local government and to allow power to be exercised at the lowest practical level, close to the people who are affected by decisions. The Act contains provisions that will allow local authorities to change from operating executive arrangements to a committee system.
4. The purpose of this report is for Council to consider whether further work should be undertaken to plan how a committee system could operate in practice. The provisions enabling Council to make a formal decision on changing its governance arrangements are not expected to be in force until March 2012, but in the meantime the Council could develop detailed proposals and inform the public and stakeholders of its intention.
5. Under the present executive arrangements some types of decision must be taken by Council; other decisions are taken by Cabinet or its individual Members: Officers are also authorised to make certain decisions. Under a committee system, with the exception of day-to-day operational matters, decisions are made by committees comprised of councillors from all political groups, to reflect the political balance of the Council.
6. It is proposed that an article is placed on the Council's website informing the public of the intention to move to a committee system and providing a contact email for any comments. Letters will be sent to the District and Borough Councils, the City Council, and partners such as Health and the Police to inform them.
7. It is also suggested that detailed proposals regarding how the committee system could work in practice should be developed.
8. At its March/April meeting Council would then be able to consider detailed proposals and views submitted, and vote on whether to adopt the committee system.

9. If Council makes a decision in March/April 2012 to adopt the committee system the change would come into effect at the Council's annual meeting in May 2012.

Other Options Considered

10. Council could decide that there is insufficient benefit to the alternative system of governance at this time.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The rationale for a committee system is that it is the most democratic and transparent form of governance. It ensures all 67 democratically elected Councillors are able to fully participate in decision-making and shaping the policy of the Council. It ensures greater transparency in that all reports are publicly available prior to any decision being made, and all decision-making meetings are held in public.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That detailed proposals on changing the Council's governance arrangements to the committee system are developed
- 2) That the public and partners are informed of the intention to return to the committee system.
- 3) That a further report be brought to County Council following the publication of the appropriate regulations.

Councillor Kay Cutts
Leader of the Council

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SG 05/01/2012)

13. Full Council has the authority to adopt and change the Constitution and is the appropriate body to consider the matters set out in this Report

Financial Comments (MB 10/01/12)

14. There are no financial implications arising from the report. Any financial implications arising from detailed proposals will be included in a subsequent report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- The Localism Act is published by [Government](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/introduction/enacted) (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/introduction/enacted>)
- The Department for Communities and Local Government has published a [plain English guide](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1896534.pdf) to the legislation (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1896534.pdf>)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All