

Member Constitution Working Group

Briefing Note: Update on Constitution Review

Purpose of the briefing note: To update the group on plans and activities relating to the Constitution Review.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Following the publication of the Best Value report there is a requirement to undertake a significant review of the Constitution to refresh it entirely. This will include overarching issues of readability and accessibility, as well as discussion of what rules need to be included or amended.
- 1.2 The Member Constitution Working Group which is already established and has undertaken work throughout 2022 will undertake this review on behalf of General Services Committee (before final submission to Full Council for endorsement). Operating alongside this working group will be a newly created Officer Constitution Working Group (OCWG), which will consult officers on the technical, practical and professional application of any new proposed amendments.
- 1.3 External national organisations with specialisms will be brought into the review to provide capacity and expertise to ensure amendments represent national best practice.
- 1.4 This approach has been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team, Group Leaders and the General Services Committee, who have constitutional responsibility for making any recommendations to the change of the constitution to Full Council.
- 1.5 This is a large project that can only be completed in sections. As such a work programme (with associated action points table) will be devised to ensure sections are prioritised and dealt with in a systematic way.

2. Update on progress to date

- 2.1 A number of activities have already started to begin the review project:
 - a. The Centre for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) has been instructed to undertake a review of the Constitution's Finance Procedural Rules and draft a new section for inclusion in the revised constitution. CIPFA have interviewed key officers and Members and are close to completing their first draft. This will be brought through the CWGs in due course and a short training programme will be schedule and delivered by CIPFA for Members and Officers to ensure effective use of the new procedure rules.

- b. The OCWG met in June to give initial feedback on the accessibility and general use of the constitution by officers across a range of departments. Action points were collected and the second meeting is scheduled for August to agree the work programme presented to Members tonight and to begin conversations around those topics identified for August.
- c. The Centre for Governance Scrutiny (CfGS) will begin their work on the O & S function at Thurrock in late July, which will include targeted training sessions for Members and a review of work programmes. Members will be invited to meet with CfGS colleagues in coming weeks.

3. **Next Steps**

- 3.1 The Constitution Working Group is asked to note this information and to agree the work programme presented at the meeting.

4. **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community**

- 4.1 There is a need to review the constitution in greater detail and totality than in previous years to comply with the findings of the Best Value Report. The useability of the constitution by all levels of the organisation is important and requires a systematic review which engages the wider Member and officer body.

For any questions regarding this briefing note, please contact:

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