

Wolverhampton City Council

OPEN DECISION ITEM

Committee/ Panel	SPECIAL ADVISORY GROUP		Date: 09.06.11
	STANDARDS COMMITTEE		Date: 16.06.11
Originating Service Group(s)	DELIVERY/OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Contact Officer(s)/	M COSTELLO	S KEMBREY	F DAVIS
Telephone Number(s)	4544	4910	4932
Title/Subject Matter	<u>COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION - PROJECT PLAN</u>		

Recommendations

That Members approve:-

- (a) The scope of the Comprehensive Review of the Constitution;
- (b) The governance arrangements for the project.

1.0 **Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise Special Advisory Group and Standards Committee of the project details for the Comprehensive Review of the Council's Constitution.

2.0 **Background**

- 2.1 At annual Council on 18 May 2011, Members approved a Comprehensive Review of the Council's Constitution be undertaken in 2011 - 2012 with the aim of publishing a new Constitution in May 2012.
- 2.2 The scope of the Constitution Review Project has been informed by the recommendations for improvement, incorporating "Lessons Learnt", following recommendations/advice contained in:
- The report on the Constitution by Stewart Dobson,
 - Advice on Governance from Leading Council relating to decision making concerning Victoria Halls,
 - The review by Patricia Hughes into the 2007/2008 Equal Pay COT3 payments,
 - Contracting issues reported to the Audit Committee in November 2010,
 - PWC's Internal Audit Effectiveness Review reported to Audit Committee in April 2011
 - The Wragge & Co. Scoping Review concerning the proposed partnership with Axon Solutions Limited.
 - Also, a review concerning the partnership with Axon Solutions Limited is currently underway.
- 2.3 The current Constitution has been updated to operate during 11/12, it incorporates:-
- Reviewed Financial Procedure and Contract Procedure Rules.
 - Amendments to reflect the Senior Management Restructure, "Leading For A Stronger City". This entailed a complete review of the Schedule of Delegations to Officers contained in Part 3 of the Constitution.
 - Amendments approved at annual Council on 18 May 2011.
- 2.4 The full review requires a substantial re-write of the Constitution. To manage this task the Constitution Review Project contains a number of work streams. These are identified in the Project Scope diagram (Appendix A). The Project Scope Diagram identifies 5 specialist projects with the specific components of each identified below.
- 2.5 The timescale of the project will run during 2011/2012 and includes the requirement for the project to consider the impacts of the Localism Bill.
- 2.6 In terms of resources, a Project Manager has been appointed internally to implement and drive the project, and within the Council a dedicated in-house lawyer has been assigned to the project, a specialist external consultant is available, if required.
- ## 3.0 **Governance Arrangements**
- 3.1 The Constitution Review will be an inclusive process, engaging Members and Officers throughout. The phased approach to the project will include a series of workshops and briefings to ensure Members are involved and that their views can be taken on board. The aim is to produce a Constitution which is accessible, easy to use, written in plain English and fit for purpose, in appropriate formats.

3.2 The governance structure for the project is provided at Appendix B. The approach includes the formation of a Member Group, (described as Member Engagement in the diagram) to engage Members in an informal advisory role from the outset and throughout the project. Proposed changes to the Constitution will be reported to Members through Special Advisory Group and Standards Committee and then for approval by Full Council.

3.3 The Project will be sponsored by the Interim Strategic Director for Delivery who will receive monthly highlight reports at the Improvement Programme Board.

4.0 **Financial Implications**

4.1 There are financial implications arising from the Comprehensive Review Project. These relate to the costs of the project manager and any backfill for the lawyer dedicated to the project. These costs will be met from the Efficiency Reserve, the use of which will be formally approved in the Quarter One Revenue Budget Monitoring that is presented to Cabinet (Resources) Panel in July 2011. However, the revisions to the Constitution will strengthen the Council's Governance arrangements. The ultimate aim of this is to improve the Council's ability to secure the best possible outcomes from available resources, and to be able to demonstrate that it has done so.

[GE/08062011/P]

5.0 **Legal Implications**

5.1 The Council is required by Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare and publish a Constitution which contains its standing orders relating to decision making, finance and contracts. The Council is also required to keep its Constitution updated.

[FD/08062011/L]

6.0 **Equal Opportunities Implications**

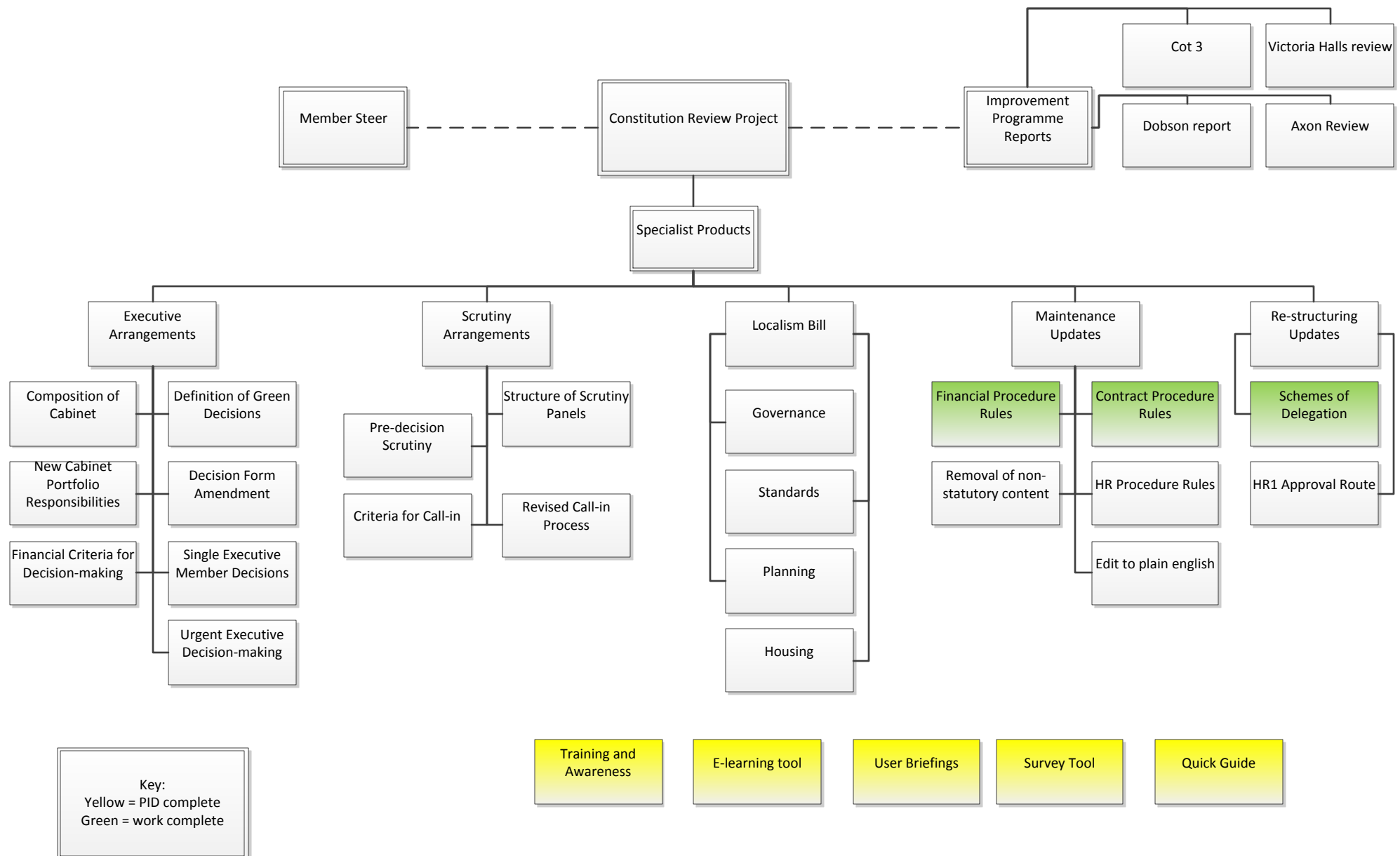
6.1 The Constitution is an essential part of the Council's corporate governance framework, and plays a crucial role in ensuring that the Council fulfils its equalities responsibilities.

7.0 **Environmental Implications**

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

8.0 **Schedule of Background Papers**

Comprehensive Review of the Constitution - Project Plan documents.

WCC Constitution Review
Project Scope Diagram v0.3

WCC Constitution Review Project Governance Structure v1.1

