

# Governance Committee

12 February 2021

<b>Report title</b>	Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance	
<b>Accountable director</b>	David Pattison, Director of Governance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Governance	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	David Pattison	Director of Governance
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<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Not applicable.	

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## Recommendation for action:

The Governance Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and provide any feedback on the report.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the work programme and other matters within the scope of the Governance Committee's remit. The work programme was approved by the Committee at its meeting in January 2021.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution sets out the remit of the Governance Committee below:

### **1. Terms of Reference – Governance Committee**

- 1.1 *The Governance Committee shall be an advisory body, comprising Councillors, dealing with governance and constitutional arrangements.*
- 1.2 *The Governance Committee shall, where appropriate, consider and advise the Council on matters relating to the Council's governance and Constitution, including standards of conduct, the timetable of meetings, the administrative and procedural arrangements for implementing new legislation and the terms of reference of or scheme of delegation to Council bodies.*
- 1.3 *The Governance Committee shall consider and advise the Council on elections and electoral arrangements, including boundary reviews, and polling districts, places and stations, where these are not the sole responsibility of the Returning Officer.*
- 1.4 *The Governance Committee will be consulted, and may offer feedback for consideration, on elections and electoral arrangements that are the sole responsibility of the Returning Office.*
- 1.5 *The Governance Committee shall advise Full Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Councillors' Allowances Scheme.*

### **2.0 Additional Role and Functions**

- 2.1 *The Governance Committee will have the following additional terms of reference: -*
- a. to liaise between the Council and the Ombudsman;*
  - b. to advise the Council on the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderman or Freedom of the City;*
  - c. to advise the Council on the making, amendment, revocation or re-enactment of bylaws and the promotion of or opposition to local or personal Bills in Parliament.*

2.2 The Committee agreed the following work programme for the remainder of the 2020-2021 Municipal Year:

<b>Governance Committee Forward Plan for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year</b>			
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Publication Deadline</b>
22 January 2021	Local Election Fees and Charges 2021/2022	Laura Noonan/David Pattison	14 January 2021
12 February 2021	Report on 2020 Annual Canvass	Laura Noonan/David Pattison	4 February 2021
	Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters	David Pattison	
12 March 2021	Update on 2021 Elections	Laura Noonan/David Pattison	4 March 2021
	Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Review	Stephanie Taylor/Laura Noonan/David Pattison	
	Petition Scheme	Jaswinder Kaur	
	Calendar of Meetings	Jaswinder Kaur	
	Constitution Review	Jaswinder Kaur/David Pattison	
	Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters	David Pattison	

2.3 This report provides an update on issues coming to the Committee and any developing issues within the scope of the Committee and if they take place after the publication of the report a verbal update will be given. As always, if Members of the Committee wish for other items to be added they should speak to the Chair of the Committee.

### 3.0 Update on position

3.1 Work Programme – an update on the work programme is below:

- 22 January 2021 – the Local Election Fees report was supported.
- 12 February 2021 - the annual canvass report is on the agenda.
- 12 March 2021 – a number of reports are due to come to the meeting on 12 March 2021, details of these are below.

3.2 **Elections update** - a detailed report will come to the 12 March 2021 – at present a significant amount of work is taking place to ensure that the elections on 6 May 2021 will take place safely and efficiently. As the Committee is aware the election is a triple election consisting of City Council elections (for 1/3 of the seats and by-elections), election of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the West Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral election. The work to date includes:

- An urgent review of the Polling Stations to ensure that all polling stations are Covid secure.
- Agreeing the Local Election Fees Report.
- Ensuring a Covid secure approach to the Verification and Count.
- Ensuring that we will be providing regular communications with candidates and agents and with electors to provide confidence in the election – the first briefing for Candidates and Agents will be a virtual briefing on 2 March 2021.

**3.3 Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review** – as the Committee is aware the Commission is currently undertaking a review of the electoral arrangements for the Council. This has been the subject of a number of reports to the Committee the most recent being the report dated to the 20 November 2020 Committee.

The Commission's consultation is currently live and due to conclude at the end of March 2021. In terms of the Council's proposed response to the Commission's consultation we are following the approach agreed by the Committee in November and will be bringing a report to the next meeting of the Committee in March.

**3.4 Constitution revisions** – as the Committee is aware a review of the Constitution is underway. A detailed report will be brought to the Committee shortly. The aim of the review is to reflect developments including the Local Government Association's adoption of a Model Code of Conduct, improve the understanding of the constitution and to make it easier to navigate for Councillors, Officers and the Public and address issues/points raised by Councillors.

Previously the Committee has, at its meetings on 28 February 2020 and 19 March 2020 considered proposals to introduce some changes through the Constitution to modernise the political structure of the Council, in particular scrutiny arrangements. These changes were taken to the Committee on 19 March 2020 and were then paused following the Covid pandemic.

This report attaches a presentation to the Committee proposing that the changes are paused until May 2022, with the introduction of a pilot in late 2021/early 2022 and, confirms that there will be cross-party representation to the proposed Cabinet Advisory Groups and recording of the meetings for access by the public. A detailed report on the approach will be brought forward shortly.

**3.5 Petition Scheme/Calendar of Meetings** – as part of the preparation for the new Municipal year from May 2021 a proposed Calendar of meetings and revisions to the petition scheme will be brought to the next meeting.

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

**4.1** There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation in this report as Governance Committee is simply asked to note the update and provide any feedback.  
[GE/05022021/G]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 This is simply an update report and no substantive decisions are made through it so there are no legal implications as such. [DP/04022021/A].

## **6.0 All Other Implications**

6.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

## **7.0 Schedule of background papers**

7.1 Forward Plan for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year - 22 January 2021 - Governance Committee.

7.2 Local Election Fees and Charges 2021-2022 - 22 January 2021 - Governance Committee.

7.3 Electoral Review: Update on Phase Two - 20 November 2020 - Governance Committee.

7.4 Changes to the Constitution as a result of Covid-19 and other urgent changes - 11 September 2020 - Governance Committee.

7.5 Modernising the Political Structure - 19 March 2020 - Governance Committee.

7.6 Modernising the Political Structure - 28 February 2020 - Governance Committee.

7.7 Electoral Review: Council Size Submission and Electoral Projections - 19 February 2020 - Governance Committee.

## **8.0 Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1 – Modernising the Political Structure Update.