

Modernising Political Structures Update

12 February 2021

Today

1. Why were we looking to change the structures?
2. Summary of proposals including what is left to do
3. What has changed since March last year?
4. Challenges
5. Proposed next Steps

Why were we looking to change the structures?

Why were we looking to change the structures?

- *Improving the way scrutiny works – adding value and focusing on things that matter.*
- *Improving the engagement and involvement of backbenchers/non-Cabinet Members.*
- *Greater involvement in policy development at an earlier stage – to improve policies/buy-in.*
- *Improved transparency on how the policies/decisions are taken.*

Modernising Political Structures – Summary of the proposals

The proposed changes to the Council's Political Structures produced in early 2020 included:

- *The reduction of the number of Cabinet Panels from 3 to 1.*
- *Introduction of 6 Cabinet Advisory Groups (CAG) with one overarching CAG on resources made up of each CAG chairs.*
- *Realignment of Scrutiny structures – one formal Scrutiny Board and two panels (Performance and Health Scrutiny).*
- *Introduction of 3 Select Committee Reviews.*
- *Revised Cabinet Portfolios – with same number of Cabinet Members*
- *No reduction or increase in level of allowances – allowance for Chair of CAG same as for Scrutiny Panels.*

Where are we at and what was left to do? (1)

- Cabinet portfolios were revised and priorities re-aligned.
- The CAGs were linked to suggested portfolios and draft Terms of Reference were developed.
- Terms of Reference were drafted for the Scrutiny Board/Panels – Call in remains with Scrutiny Board.
- Terms of Reference were drafted for Select Committee Reviews and the Lead Reviewer Role.
- Allowances report and a benchmarking exercise was undertaken for the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Panel met and approved the approach on the scheme of allowances.
- A Report went to Governance Committee on 19 March 2020, recommending adoption of model/new allowances but not to Council as the meeting was cancelled due to Covid.

Where are we at and what is left to do? (2)

- Clear work programme for each CAG.
- Clear work programme for Select Committees.
- Clear work programme for Scrutiny.
- Formal changes to the Constitution to be approved.
- Allowances scheme, incorporating this, to be approved by Council.
- Updating approach in the light of developments since March 2020.

What has changed since March 2020?

- Covid.....
- Relighting the City Plan – new focus.
- Remote meetings including Scrutiny – slight changes – Cabinet (Performance) Panel has gone and now Cabinet and Cabinet (Resources) Panel are on the same day once a month.

Challenges(1)

- **Timing....**

- To introduce it for May 2021, we would need to go to Council on 31 March 2021 – that would mean Governance Committee on 12 March 2021(to approve the changes to the constitution to reflect the approach) and significant discussions in February.
- Need to ensure it works well on day 1 – therefore need clear work programmes for CAGs and Select Committees/Scrutiny – do we need to change the focus of the Portfolios/CAGs etc in the light of priorities adopted in recent months – is there sufficient time in all teams to do this?
- Other competing priorities – including Covid response and vaccination.

- **Remote meetings**

- Ensuring that the new approach is a success in a remote meeting system is challenging.

Challenges(2)

- **Potential amendments to the model**
 - *Our proposed model based on Kent approach* – we have spoken to their Monitoring Officer about their approach, Kent have had their version of CAGs with cross party representation – **my recommendation is that we build cross party representation into the CAG model.**
 - *Public attendance for some of the meetings* – transparency – Kent have had public attendance possible for the meetings – **my recommendation is that in order to ensure a transparent approach the meetings are video recorded and made available (where confidential matters not discussed).**

Options

Do we proceed with the changes?

Monitoring Officer recommendation – we should but with some slight tweaks the key challenge is timing.

If we do, when?

- 1) Proceed ahead with implementation for May 2021.
- 2) **Recommended approach** - Look to implement a pilot of the new approach in late 2021/early 2022 with full implementation in May 2022.
- 3) Look to implement in May 2022.

Next steps if the approach is agreed

- Bring forward amendments to the Constitution to allow for a pilot in autumn 2021 – these amendments would come to Governance Committee and then to Council.
- Bring forward detail proposals in late 2021/ early 2022 to allow for changes to the constitution to introduce the new model as from May 2022 – these amendments would come to Governance Committee and then to Council.

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