

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Offices, via Zoom on the 17 August 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Elias (Chair), M.Cooper (Vice-Chair), Botten, Bourne, Caulcott, Davies, Duck, Langton, Lee, Milton, Pursehouse and Sayer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen, Bloore, Connolly, Farr, Gray, Lockwood, Ridge, Steeds, Vickers and N.White

85. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 28TH JULY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th July 2020 were approved as a correct record. It was noted that, regarding Minute 76 (Strategic Plan) the Local Government Association has since confirmed that, following an investigation of other potential data sources, the 2011 census is still the most up to date source for statistics about travelling to work. Officers could therefore confirm that, based on currently available evidence, it is correct to say that most (working age) residents travel to work outside the District by car.

86. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

This review, conducted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), was originally submitted to the Committee on 28th July 2020 (Minute 75 refers). Consideration of the matter had been deferred, hence the main reason for convening this meeting.

The accompanying officer report recommended that the committee:

- A. *discusses and notes the findings of the independent review of the Council's governance;*
- B. *endorses the statement by Group Leaders as set out at section 3.2 of the report;*
- C. *requires to see a separate Implementation Plan by September 1st that addresses the review's recommendations, with dates and owners for each activity; and*
- D. *agrees to review progress against this Plan.*

Councillor Sayer, seconded by Councillor Botten, proposed that with reference to recommendation A, *"the findings of the independent review of the Council's governance be noted, additionally noting the summary of the recommendations as per 2.5 of the covering report, subject to the 9th bullet point being amended to read:*

- *Developing a clearer understanding of members' roles, including the role of parties in opposition and ensuring that councillors lead on strategy and, where appropriate, officers lead on operational matters."*

Upon being put to the vote, this amendment was agreed.

Councillor Botten proposed that recommendations C and D be deleted and that a new C be inserted as follows:

“That a Full Council meeting be convened as soon as possible to consider the following recommendations:

- (1) Each Council Committee will have a second Vice Chair to be appointed at the next meeting of that committee, (drawing no special responsibility allowance) drawn from one of the main opposition groups*
- (2) All members agree to abide by the Nolan Principles which should be printed at the head of each Council and committee agenda paper, for the next committee cycle, and which should be agreed by each member signing a document setting them out on an annual basis, and on this occasion as soon as practicable*
- (3) Full Council meeting agendas should begin with Members Question Time, lasting no longer than sixty minutes, for which members give notice of questions to the Leader or Committee chairs, and may have up to two supplementary questions in response to their replies*
- (4) At full Council meetings, Committee minutes are, subject to the necessary legalities, agreed en bloc, rather than item by item*
- (5) A Task and Finish Group of three members drawn from each of the three major Groups shall review the production of committee papers and make recommendations to S&R at its meeting at the end of September”.*

This was seconded by Councillor Sayer, subject to (1) above (appointments of second Vice Chairs) being restricted to the Community Services, Housing, Planning, Planning Policy and Strategy & Resources Committees. Upon being put to the vote, the revised amendment was agreed.

Councillor Milton, seconded by Councillor Cooper, proposed that recommendation C be replaced with, *“a Committee Review Working Group (CRWG) be appointed to report to the Strategy & Resources Committee, formed of two Members from each main party and one from the Independent Group. The CRWG to consider action to promote the pre-eminent role of Committees in the decision-making framework of the Council and make recommendations, based on observations noted in the Hammond Report, to the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting on 22nd September”.* Upon being put to the vote, this amendment was lost.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the findings of the independent review of the Council’s governance be noted, additionally noting the summary of the recommendations as per 2.5 of the covering report (Appendix A refers) subject to the 9th bullet point being amended to read:
 - “Developing a clearer understanding of members’ roles, including the role of parties in opposition and ensuring that councillors lead on strategy and, where appropriate, officers lead on operational matters”;

- B. the following statement by Group Leaders be endorsed:

“As Group Leaders, we recognise that the Council is in a difficult position. The ongoing Covid-19 crisis presents us with significant difficulties which are exacerbated by the existing, deep-set issues about governance. These issues are not new and have been present in the Council for some time. The response and solution to these issues must lie with us acting collectively as leaders of each of the Council’s political groups, working with the Council’s senior officers. What we have in common is the desire to see local people served and supported by the work that both Members and Officers do together as a Council: we are committed to working together to address the issues.”;

- C. a Full Council meeting be convened as soon as possible to consider the following recommendations:
- (i) the Community Services, Housing, Planning, Planning Policy and Strategy & Resources Committees will have a second Vice Chair, to be appointed at the next meeting of those committees (drawing no special responsibility allowance) drawn from one of the main opposition groups;
 - (ii) all members shall agree to abide by the Nolan Principles which should be printed at the head of each Council and committee agenda paper for the next committee cycle, and which should be agreed by each member signing a document setting them out on an annual basis and, on this occasion, as soon as practicable;
 - (iii) Full Council meeting agendas should begin with Members’ Question Time, lasting no longer than sixty minutes, for which members give notice of questions to the Leader or Committee chairs, and may have up to two supplementary questions in response to their replies;
 - (iv) at full Council meetings, Committee minutes, subject to the necessary legalities, be agreed en bloc, rather than item by item; and
 - (v) a Task and Finish Group of three members, drawn from each of the three major Groups, shall review the production of committee papers and make recommendations to the Strategy & Resources Committee at its meeting at the end of September.

87. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

It was anticipated that the forthcoming White Paper on recovery and devolution could result in the establishment of unitary authorities in place of the current two-tier structure of County Councils and Districts/Boroughs. Full Council, on 16th July 2020, had agreed a motion calling upon the Secretary of State to consider alternative models to the single Surrey unitary favoured by Surrey County Council. A letter, dated 22nd July, had been sent to the Secretary of State to this effect.

All eleven District and Borough Councils in Surrey had also agreed to work together to consider alternative delivery models, recognising that change was needed but that a single Surrey unitary was not practicable. These views had been expressed in a joint letter to the Secretary of State (23rd July 2020) signed by the eleven District / Borough Leaders.

The Committee was advised that, as part of a joint approach to scoping alternative restructuring options, each of the eleven Districts and Boroughs had been asked to contribute £10,000 towards engaging consultants. While the Committee supported the proposed contribution, Members expressed a wish for the identity of the consultants and the associated brief to be communicated as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – that a contribution of £10,000 be approved to support work on a joint District and Borough Council outline proposal for the development of alternatives to a single unitary structure for Local Government in Surrey.

Rising 9.00 pm