

# FEEDBACK FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON COMMITTEE REPORTS

## Strategy & Resources Committee – 24 November 2020

Report of: Executive Head of Corporate Resources

Purpose: For information

Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

The Task and Finish Group looking at the production of committee papers has identified improvements to be made to the template for committee reports, associated guidance and officer training.

The improvements are designed to make reports more concise and accessible.

Changes to the report template have been implemented, and officer training is being procured.

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**This report supports the Council's priority of:** Building a better Council

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### Recommendation to Committee:

That the Committee note changes to the committee report template which were informed by the Committee Reports Task and Finish Group and plans for officer training.

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### Reason for recommendation:

To complete implementation of the recommendation relating to the production of committee papers adopted by Full Council on 16<sup>th</sup> September.

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## Introduction and background

- 1 At its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September, Full Council adopted the following recommendation:  
*'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.'*
- 2 The Task and Finish Group was formed of the following Councillors:
  - Cllr Kevin Bourne
  - Cllr Celia Caulcott
  - Cllr Michael Cooper
- 3 The Group received support from relevant officers and met twice.
- 4 The timing of the Full Council decision did not allow the preparation of recommendations to the September meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee.

## Outcomes of the work of the Task and Finish Group

- 5 The Group made recommendations relating to:
  - i) the **standard template** for Committee reports (this report follows the template agreed by the Group);
  - ii) the **guidance** to be given to officers when using the template, including the need for reports to be concise, clearly presented and using Plain English;
  - iii) the content of **officer training** in relation to writing reports for Councillor decisions.
- 6 As the determination of the format of committee papers is a decision delegated to officers, the new template and guidance has been implemented with immediate effect: this will mainly be seen in reports coming through to the January cycle of meetings.
- 7 Training for officers on report writing, including the requirements identified by the Task and Finish Group, is currently being procured and is targeted for delivery by mid-December. This will include a pre-recorded video of a Councillor explaining their needs.
- 8 The cost of the officer training will be in the region of £7,000 (based on delivery to approximately 30 officers and excluding officer time) and will be met within the Council's centralised officer training budget.
- 9 The template for Committee reports will be kept under review: any Councillors with suggestions for further improvement are invited to share them with members of the Task and Finish Group.

## **Other options considered**

- 10 Given the specific recommendation which set the remit of the Task and Finish Group, no alternative options were considered.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **Equality**

Measures to make committee reports more concise and easily understood will help people from a wider range of backgrounds to engage with the Council's decision-making process, for example people who do not have English as a first language.

## **Climate change**

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background papers**

None.