

## **Governance Arrangements – 2<sup>nd</sup> Members Survey**

### **Final results**

The governance structure of the Council changed in May 2013, with an ‘early indication’ survey undertaken in October 2013.

This second survey was open from the 3 February to the 14 February, with a response rate of 68.5% (37 of 54 members have responded).

### **Context**

- 70% of respondents had completed the earlier survey, with 72% not having changed their opinion since the last survey;
- Of those responding 86.5% said that they had formed an opinion on how the new governance arrangements were working;
- 54% of respondents had no special responsibility; and
- A majority of respondents (56%) were backbenchers.

### **Advisory Committees**

- A majority (60%) did not think that Portfolio Holders should Chair Advisory Committees;
- 68% said there should be more meetings of the Advisory Committees, with 65% agreeing that 6 Advisory Committee meetings would be about right;
- 27% of respondents agreed that the Council would work better with 3 Advisory Committees with more frequent meetings;
- 57% of respondents would prefer if Councillors were allowed to sit on 2 Advisory Committees, with 70% of all respondents saying that they think they would have a wider understanding of the work of the Council if they were able to sit on more than one Advisory Committee.

### **Working Groups**

- 60% of respondents believe that working groups work effectively.

### **Cabinet & Portfolio Holders**

- 51% of respondents think there should be more Portfolio Holders (43% disagree);
- 51% believe responsibility for matters would be clearer with smaller Portfolio Briefs and more Portfolio Holders (43% disagree); and
- 51% think there should be fewer Deputy Portfolio Holders (41% disagree).

## **Scrutiny Committee**

- 46% of respondents would prefer Scrutiny to change to a fixed membership rather than the current 'Pool' system (32% disagree, with 22% saying that they do not know).

## **Effectiveness**

- 56% of respondents believe that the new working arrangements do not improve accessibility of Portfolios and reduce remoteness;
- 62% do not feel more engaged in decision making or more able to influence decisions made;
- 60% do not feel that training and councillor development has improved;
- 58% do not believe that succession planning for Cabinet has improved;
- When asked whether the new system has led to an improvement on the previous working arrangements 43% said yes, 43% said no, with the remaining 14% saying that they do not know.

## **Comments**

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to record any comments they had in relation to the questions in the survey. Set out below is a summary of the issues raised in the 19 comments provided.

## **Advisory Committees**

- They are there to advise the Portfolio and it is therefore right that the Portfolio Holder is able to chair the meeting
- Advisory Groups should be able to choose their own Chairman but not adverse to this being the Portfolio Holder if so selected
- Preference that they are independently chaired to improve backbencher involvement
- Concern that 4 meetings is insufficient
- Preference for sitting on more than one Advisory Committee

## **Working Groups**

- Are really helpful in reducing feelings of remoteness and add value to the Council at no additional financial cost
- Are a way in which member involvement can increase
- Are a way of keeping down the number of Advisory Committee meetings as work can be carried out between meetings
- Suggested that all Advisory Committee Members should be involved in working groups
- Not all working groups have been effective
- Working group subjects could be more substantial

- Could be seen as a demotion of the role of Councillors

### **Cabinet & Portfolio Holders**

- Leader should decide on Cabinet and Portfolios
- Cabinet is not big enough
- Size of Cabinet limits opportunities for advancement of backbenchers
- Less Deputy Cabinet Members
- Cabinet positions should be rotated and changed every 4 years
- Number of Portfolio Holders is about right
- Portfolio of services could be more equal in size to prevent some being overloaded

### **Scrutiny Committee**

- Gives backbenchers a chance to hold Cabinet Members to account

### **Other comments**

- Member involvement in decision making seems to have declined
- Councillors seem more remote from council business
- Unclear why the original decision to not remunerate Vice Chairman has been reversed
- Training and development for Councillors is an area that needs to be addressed
- Survey questions did not all appear to be neutral
- The new system has more roles for Councillors so everyone should be more involved