

REPORT OF THE 'CHAIRMAN ROLE' WORKING GROUP

Council - 19 November 2019

Report of Chief Officer Customer and Resources
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Status For consideration

Also considered by: Governance Committee - 5 November 2019

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: This item is for the Committee to receive the report of the Members working group on the roles of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

Contact Officer Martin Goodman, Ext. 7245

Recommendation to Governance Committee: That

- (a) the report of the Member working group and its recommendations be noted;
- (b) the recommendations of the Member working group be further recommended to Council for adoption but only subject to any necessary growth item being approved through the formal budget-making process;
- (c) Any recommendations for growth be referred to the next meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee for consideration.

Reason for recommendation: To progress the recommendations of the Member working group.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Chairman's role is defined in Part 2 to the Constitution. This sets out that the Chairman of the Council will carry out the ceremonial duties of the Council attending such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council and/or s/he determines appropriate.
- 2 The Chairman is the "first resident" of the District and takes precedence over others present at any function (except for the Sovereign or

representative of the Sovereign). The Chairman is also responsible for Chairing Council meetings.

- 3 The role of the Chairman of the Council was significantly reduced by Members during the 2011/12 budgeting process, resulting in a saving of £68,000 per year (SCIA 39). At that time Members voted for a major reduction in Chairman's activities with the ceasing of all civic events and the deletion of the Chairman's administrative support role.
- 4 It was understood by Members at the time that this would lead to a much reduced profile for the District's Chairman except for attendance at events at no cost. At the time, Members were reminded that a small Chairman's transport fund would remain available and could be used until it was exhausted, although it was noted that many former Chairmen had driven themselves to most events. Members also noted that the Chairman and Vice Chairman would still receive significant allowances they could spend as they wished to support their roles.

The Chairman

- 5 The Chairman is invited to a wide range of events both inside and outside the District. A large number of these are social in nature and a good number involve significant travel implications. There are at present no constitutional provisions limiting the scope of attendance at such events and it is unclear which events are supported by the Council's resources. There is no clarity on permissible travel expenses, for example by taxi, although there is a limited budget from which such claims may be paid.
- 6 Members will be aware that there is at present no secretarial or dedicated administrative support for the Chairman. Officers of Democratic Services offer limited assistance by way of diary and event management over and above their normal duties.

The Member working group

- 7 Members will recall that at the last meeting of the Governance Committee Members decided to form a working group to define the role of the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The intention was clarify what the Chairman's allowance was intended to cover and any travel expenses which may legitimately be claimed. The working group was set up in the understanding that any growth item would need to be considered through the budget setting process.
- 8 The working group was still producing its report at the time of publication. This will be made public when it is available.

Key Implications

Financial

Greater administrative support than is currently made available to the Chairman

will need to be budgeted as a growth item. It is not possible to widen the scope of Officer support, or to provide greater support for travel expenses, without a growth item.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

No relevant legal implications or Risk Assessment.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

This report proposes a Member working group and makes no recommendations as to outcome.

Appendices Report of the Working Group

Background Paper None

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Chief Officer Corporate & Resources

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Head of Legal and Democratic Services