



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

BACKGROUND PAPERS PACK

6. **Governance Systems Task Group - Final Report** (Pages 1 - 16)

This background papers pack contains a copy of the presentation that was delivered at a briefing held for all Members on the subject of the outcomes of the Governance Systems Task Group's review, which took place on Friday 8th September 2023.

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11th September 2023

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Member Briefing



Agenda

1. The Process Undertaken
2. High level analysis of different options
3. Design Principles
4. Task Group's views analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses based on Design Principles
5. Financial Analysis



The Process Undertaken

Meeting 1 – Understand the Options

Meeting 2 – Agree the design Principles

Meeting 3 – Presentation from Cllr Brown – Ctte Structure

Meeting 4 – Presentation Ian Parry CfGS on other Options

Meeting 5 – Strengths and Weaknesses of options

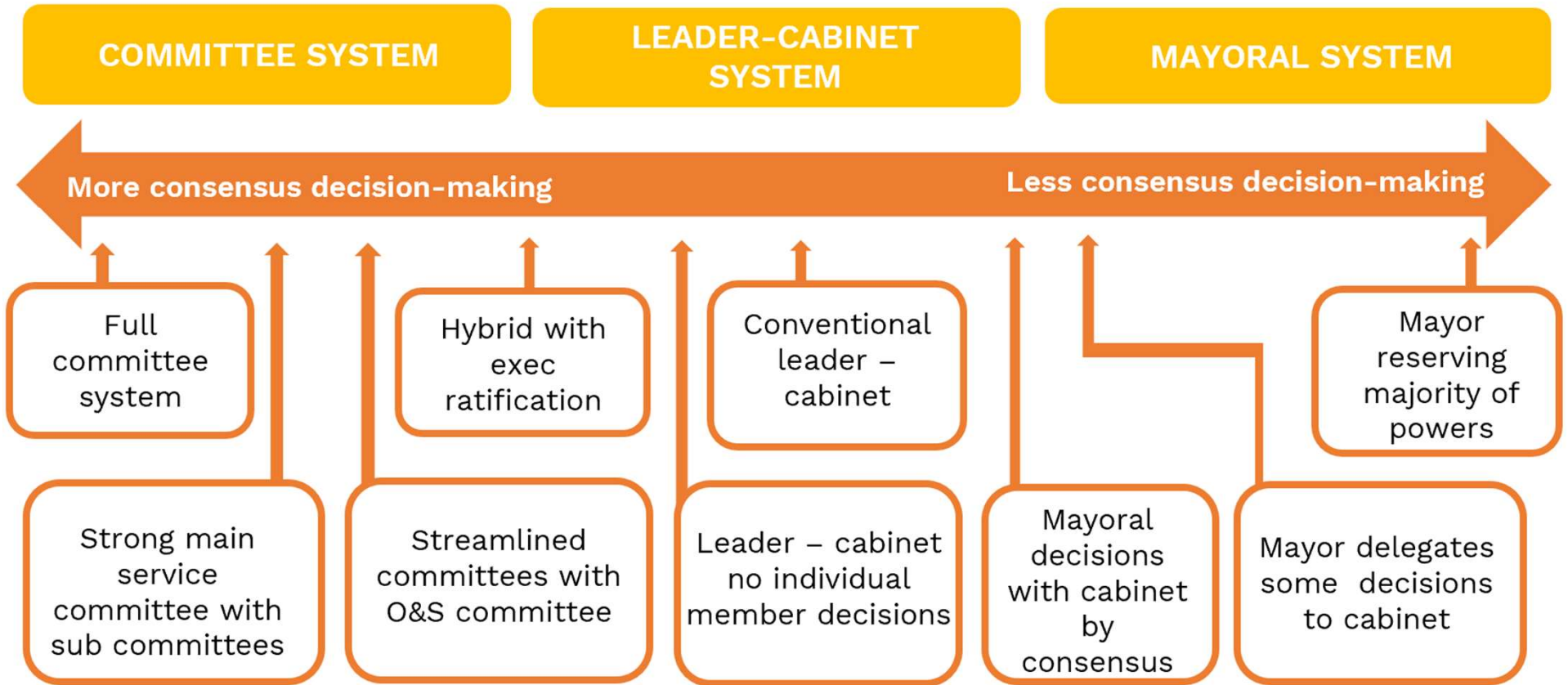
Meeting 6 – Overall Review including Financial Analysis



High Level Analysis of different Governance models

- Leader and Cabinet model
- Mayoral model
- Committee system
- Hybrid
- Something else!





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Objectives of Task Group

To establish the governance options available, including an assessment of any additional/reduced costs and Member & Officer time requirements associated with those options, and to make recommendations to Council on the most appropriate for Bromsgrove ensuring the inclusion of:

- a. effective decision making
- b. cross party engagement
- c. inclusive policy development and decision making
- d. constitutionally, the principles of equality, inclusiveness, efficiency and accountability are embedded



Strengths

- ✓ Overview and scrutiny
- ✓ Detailed task groups
- ✓ Cross party membership on Cabinet
- ✓ A more collaborative approach (especially since May 23)
- ✓ Member training

Weaknesses

- X Members not all having access to information
- X Involvement of some Members too late in the process
- X Lack of cross party involvement particularly before May
- X The geographical sprawl and level of involvement and inclusion of outlying parts of the District
- X Members having a lack of trust and confidence in each other
- X Residents' confidence in the process
- X Members feeling that the process was not open and transparent
- X Taking all members on the journey
- X Timelines for decision making and reporting
- X The number of meetings



Design principles

- ✓ The timeliness of information
- ✓ Skills based roles for members (e.g. for Chairmen)
- ✓ Consensus based decisions – cross party (protection of collaborative working)
- ✓ Putting residents of the whole district of Bromsgrove at the centre of all decisions
- ✓ Assurance (members being sure that the right things are being done in the right way)
- ✓ Trust and mutual respect
- ✓ Active participation from members (backbench)
- ✓ Cost neutral (the new system not costing more)



Future ways of working

- Opposition chairs Opposition to sit on Cabinet
- Protocols to define intended ways of working
- More involvement of backbench members – Cabinet advisory groups
- Communication
 - Inclusive member led work programming in scrutiny – based on prioritisation (which should lead to more involvement in critical issues/decisions/policy development)
 - Continue for information to be available to inform groups – communication is better – via group meetings
 - Timeliness – to allow O&S sufficient time to consider decisions ahead of Cabinet
 - Member access to information / awareness raising / member learning and development (as an aim)



Design principle	Current arrangements		Committee System (based on learning from Cheshire East)		Additions?
	Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons	
The timeliness of information and decision making	More efficient decision making process. Less delegation Fewer reports for noting		Administration must always have a majority Committees responsible for Policy, not delivery Pace of decision making has not changed	Number of reports for noting/decisions (more is delegated to officers) Some decisions taken under urgency powers.	Important to note that process would need to in place to improve Member access to information so that Members get info in timely manner
Skills based roles for members (e.g. for Chairmen)	Advisory groups enable membership based on skill			Committees require political proportionality	Cabinet to engage and involve O&S to be strengthened and this to be cemented in the Constitution System to allow members to be more involved on a cross-party basis
Consensus based decisions – cross party (protection of collaborative working)	Hybrid does enable a greater degree of flexibility Collective and cross party decision making No member has individual	Cabinet is great, as long as you're in it!	Solves problems More participation Member involvement Collective responsibility It does make for more collegiate working	Generates other Committees More meetings More work to do No guarantee which way decisions will go.	



Design principle	Current arrangements		Committee System (based on learning from Cheshire East)		Additions?
	Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons	
Putting residents of the whole district of Bromsgrove at the centre of all decisions	Member surgeries and working groups on key matters create opportunities for all members to feed into decisions and how they affect each ward across the whole district		Dealing with cross-cutting issues It has facilitated a culture transformation It has changed perceptions of the council	More difficult to meet residents expectations given the lack of understanding	Constitute working practices – ensure future proofed Cement geographical representation
Assurance (members being sure that the right things are being done in the right way)	The cross party working arrangements enable more scrutiny and greater knowledge and understanding		Decision making is more transparent Better engagement key items e.g. budget	Committees can make “rogue” decisions Committee Chairs meeting – is closed so how actually transparent is it	



Design principle	Current arrangements		Committee System (based on learning from Cheshire East)		Additions?
	Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons	
Trust and mutual respect	<p>A more balanced decision making process enables more consensus and understanding.</p> <p>Improved behaviour and strengthened relationships.</p>	<p>Still in early stages and a reliance on constitutional change to enable in the longer term.</p>	<p>One-council approach vs silo working</p> <p>Each committee responsible for own budget</p> <p>It has improved cross-group working</p>	<p>Member/Officer contact time can be greater</p>	
Active participation from members (backbench)	<p>Currently achieved through balanced Cabinet and apportionment of Chairs (Licensing Audit O and S Council</p> <p>Advisory Groups and working practices</p>	<p>Dependence on constitutional change and protocols to enable back bench participation.</p>	<p>Makeup of Committee, Number of Members, Number of Committees</p> <p>It has empowered back bench members</p> <p>The level of challenge is definitely greater</p>	<p>There are definitely more meetings to attend</p> <p>Likely day time meetings could exclude some members.</p> <p>Number of reports for noting, not decisions.</p>	
Cost neutral (the new system not costing more)	N/A		<p>Changes to officer scheme of delegation</p>	<p>Changing governance is a huge undertaking</p> <p>Member/Officer contact time can be greater</p> <p>Extra demand on officers to brief Members (all members)</p> <p>More work in terms of group management.</p> <p>Member training & public comms</p>	



Financial Analysis (1)

	Number	Members	Hours	Total Hours	Members Required	Stat Officers	Dem Services	SME's	Total
Cabinet	9	7	2	18	63	2	1	?	27
Cabinet Working Group	9	7	2	18	63	2	1	?	27
O&S - Reflects Cabinet	9	11	2	18	99	2	1	?	27
Budget Working Group	6	5	1.5	9	30	2	1	?	18
Climate Change Working Group	4	5	1.5	6	20	2	1	?	12
Strategic Planning Advisory Grp	6	5	1.5	9	30	2	1	?	18
Totals	43			78	305	12	6		129

Committee Structure – Member and Officer Commitment

	Number	Members	Hours	Total Hours	Members Required	Stat Officers	Dem Services	SME's	Total
Economic Development and Regeneration Committee (EDR)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - EDR	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Leisure Culture and Climate Change Committee (LCC)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - LCC	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Finance and Enabling Committee (FEC)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - FEC	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Planning Licensing and WRS Committee (PLW)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - PLW	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Health Wellbeing and Housing Committee (HWH)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - HWH	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Environmental Services and Community Safety (ECS)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - ECS	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Policy and Resources Committee (includes Partnerships) (P&R)	6	7	2	12	42	2	1	2	30
Chairmans Briefing - P&R	6	2	1	6	12	1	1	2	24
Totals	84			126	378	21	14	28	378



Financial Analysis (2)

The Democratic Services Team number 6 fte and 1 part-time members of staff at a total cost of £282k. This structure presently supports both Councils and the WRS meetings. It needs to be pointed out that presently this group is at capacity and across both Councils and although

- 1) Some Cabinet Working Group, all (Redditch) PHB and Licensing Sub-Committee meetings at both Councils are day-time meetings, all other meetings are in the evening.
- 2) Cabinet and O&S are supported by the report writers as well as representatives from Legal Services, Finance and the Chief Executive

As set out above, the team are currently dealing with excessive workloads, and this will increase regardless of the system that is ultimately selected by Members.

Hybrid System

One additional fte Democratic Services Officer is needed to ensure full involvement of back bench members. This will cost of Circa £40k+ on costs a year. This would be an ongoing cost.

The constitution will require changing to support the changes that are now in place. We have a quotation for this and the one-off costs are circa £20k. This includes a total update of the Council's constitution.

Given that the Council are working in this way at the moment, there will be little other change



Financial Analysis (3)

Overall, the 31 members of the authority will be need to be allocated to the 6 Committees based on political proportionality. An assumption is made of 7 Members per Committee However, overall

- There is the requirement for 78 hours more of meetings (Circa a 28% increase in Member time) and 73 more members to be allocated compared to the present situation.
- Given the increase in meetings, all Members would need to be prepared to attend meetings during the day under the committee system and it is worth noting that approximately half our current membership work. This would similarly have implications for those Councillors who are dual hatters as they would have a conflict between daytime meetings held at BDC and WCC.

The biggest change however links to officer requirements

- For Statutory Officers and Democratic Services there is the requirement to attend an additional 81 hours of meetings – this is almost a 50% increase in time requirements.
- The committee system, at least two fte new members of Democratic Services staff would be needed due to all the extra hours. Currently the costs of the service are split 50:50 between the two Councils but in the Committee scenario, BDC would need to be prepared to cover the extra costs of circa £80k a year
- For Subject Matter experts, there is the new requirement to attend meetings/give briefings which amounts to 170 hours a year . This would need to be factored into their workloads and could impact on timescales for delivery of projects/services or, in the worst-case scenario, result in a need for more staff to be recruited.



Financial Analysis (4)

- Committee System – Additional Costs
- Two new fte members of Democratic Services staff costs of circa £80k + on costs a year
- The Opportunity cost of Statutory and Subject Matter Experts of circa 220 hours a year that will need to be covered (plus preparation time). This cost is at least £100k a year as it covers a range of services.
- There will be the requirement to change the Council's constitution radically if we move to a Committee structure. This would also include significant Member and Officer training and dual running as we get close to the changeover date. The estimated cost of this work/time is circa £200k. If Members opt for a Committee system, and they want to introduce this in the next municipal year, then we could not do this within existing resources. Instead, this would only be achievable if the Council procures an external organisation to undertake the work on behalf of the Council
- Increased Member Remuneration due to requirement for day-time meetings – 20% increase of Member allowances. Members allowances would inevitably increase due to daytime meetings, subject to the outcomes of a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

