



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION 1

The attached papers were specified as "to follow" on the Agenda previously distributed relating to the above mentioned meeting.

5. **Governance Systems Task Group Report (Pages 3 - 8)**

As detailed in the main agenda the notes arising from a briefing for all Members on the subject of the Task Group review, is included in this supplementary papers pack.

The relevant extract from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th September 2023 has been included in this supplementary papers pack.

5b **Recommendations from the Cabinet (Pages 13 - 20)**

The recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 13th September 2023 in respect of the Governance Systems Task Group and the relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet are included in this supplementary papers pack.

S. Hanley
Acting Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA
18th September 2023

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**Member Briefing – Outcomes of the Governance Systems Task Group Review
Friday 8th September 2023 Parkside Hall and Microsoft Teams (Hybrid Briefing)**

Members Present: (In Person) Councillors P. McDonald (Chairman) and Councillors A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. Baxter, S. Colella, C. Hotham, R. Hunter, B. McEldowney, K. May, D. Nicholls, J. Robinson and S. Robinson

(Remotely): Councillors S. Ammar, A. Dale, S. Evans, E. Gray, D. Hopkins, B. Kumar, R. Lambert, S. Nock, D. Stewart, S. Webb and P. Whittaker

Guest: Ms C. Buckley, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Officers: S. Hanley, P. Carpenter, C. Felton and J. Bayley-Hill

The Chairman, together with Ms Buckley from the CfGS, the Interim Section 151 Officer and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services, delivered a presentation on the outcomes of the Governance Systems Task Group's Final Report (please see the background papers pack).

During the delivery of the presentation, Members were asked to note the following:

- The CfGS was an independent charitable organisation which had provided expert and impartial advice to the Members of the Task Group throughout the course of the review.
- There were various governance models that could be adopted by a Council and there was no single model that was considered to be best practice.
- The Leader and Cabinet model, which Bromsgrove District Council already had in place, was the most common governance structure in local government across the country.
- There was a spectrum of governance models available to local Councils and even within specific models, there was the capacity to adapt arrangements to meet local needs.
- Bromsgrove District Council already had a more consensual governance system than many other Councils with a Leader and Cabinet model because individual Cabinet Members did not have decision making powers; instead, decisions were taken collectively at meetings of Cabinet.
- There was the potential to have hybrid versions of both the Leader and Cabinet governance model and the Committee system. Each hybrid model could look slightly different, depending on the amendments required by the particular authority, and there were no figures available regarding the number of hybrid systems in operation across the country.
- At an early stage in the review, the group had discussed and agreed a list of strengths and weaknesses that they had identified in the Council's current governance system.
- Strengths had included the appointment of Members from two different political groups to the Cabinet since the local elections held in May 2023, which Members felt had helped to develop more cross-party collaboration amongst Councillors.

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- However, Members had agreed that a weakness of the existing system was that backbench Councillors had limited opportunities to get involved in decision making.
- Trust and confidence amongst Members of different political group was also considered to be a challenge, with working relationships having been quite strained prior to the local elections in May 2023. Members had agreed that further progress could still be made in respect of this matter.
- The significant number of meetings already being held under the existing Leader and Cabinet model had been identified as a weakness of the current system.
- The Task Group had subsequently identified a number of design principles, intended to shape future ways of working at the Council.
- Members had noted that they wanted to build on collaborative ways of working and consensus building in the future.
- The group were also proposing that there needed to be more involvement of backbench Members in the future and there was the potential for the introduction of Cabinet Advisory Panels to help with this process.
- Communications had been identified as a key area for improvement, including with reference to how officers communicated with Members and responded to their queries.
- Members needed to be able to access information in a timely manner and it was noted that the Access to Information rules in the Council's constitution might need to be updated to address issues arising in relation to publication of reports for pre-decision scrutiny.
- Under the Leader and Cabinet model, it was considered best practice for the Chairmen of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees respectively to be members from an opposition group.
- Amendments could be made to the constitution to require these positions to be taken by opposition Members however, there was a limit to how far this could be extended; the Council could not fetter future administrations and appointments needed to be made in accordance with the Council's political balance.
- The need to future proof arrangements to encourage the continuation of collaborative, cross-party working regardless of the outcome of future elections had been highlighted. The suggestion was made that working protocols could assist with this.
- The Committee system involved more consensus building and provided more Members with an opportunity to participate in decision-making.
- However, under the Committee system, there would be more meetings and Members would need to do more work, including attending meetings during the day.
- The group had agreed that residents should be central to Members' considerations and to the governance structure in place at the Council.
- There was a risk with the Committee system that residents' expectations of what the Committees could do might not match a committee's remit. For example, residents might think that thematic Committees could resolve

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operational matters when in fact there would need to be a more strategic focus for these issues.

- Under the Committee system there was also the potential that Committee Chairmen would continue to meet in private to agree approaches to particular decisions and the extent to which this was transparent was questioned.
- Each Committee was responsible for its own section of the budget under the Committee system and needed to make sure that decisions were taken within budget.
- However, there was also the potential for Committees to make “rogue decisions” which, if they did not comply with the Council’s budget framework, could create serious difficulties for the authority.
- The review had challenged some of the long-serving Councillors to think differently about the authority. For example, one of the newer Councillors had commented that a recent Council meeting had been quite political whilst an experienced Member had suggested that the meeting was much more collegiate than in previous years.
- Should the Committee system be introduced this would result in an increase in Committee meetings being held at the Council.
- As the Council had many shared services with Redditch Borough Council, including a shared management team and a shared Democratic Services team, there would be a need to hold many of these meetings in the day; whilst Members would not be attending the meetings in Redditch, key Officers could be and they would also need to be available to attend the Bromsgrove meetings.
- It was noted that approximately half the Councillors currently serving at the authority had work commitments and many would struggle therefore to attend meetings during the day.
- The introduction of daytime meetings would necessitate a review of Members’ allowances as Members would need to be recompensed at an appropriate level for attending meetings during the day.
- There would be a significant financial cost to the Council arising from a decision to adopt the Committee system. This related to the need for a thorough overhaul of the Council’s constitution at an estimated cost of £200,000.
- In addition, there would be the need to recruit new staff in Democratic Services. The team were already managing excessive workloads and changes to the governance system would necessitate investment in recruiting more staff.
- The time that would need to be committed by senior and statutory officers to attending meetings would increase and this would have financial implications.
- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) would also need to be recruited to attend thematic Committees and there was the potential that this would occur at a cost to the Council.

Following the presentation, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- Whether the Task Group had fulfilled their remit, as detailed in the Motion that had been agreed at the Annual Council meeting held on 24th May 2023.

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- The reasons for references having been made to Redditch Borough Council in the presentation and in relation to the Committee system in particular.
- The date when the Chairmen of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees respectively had last been Members from the lead political group. Officers agreed to clarify this after the briefing.
- The extent to which the leading group could influence which Councillor was appointed to chair the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- The potential for the political balance to be suspended to enable a majority of opposition Members to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Board, as long as no Member voted against this proposal at Council.
- The purpose of the Cabinet surgeries and the extent to which they helped to meet the needs of local residents. The Leader advised that the purpose of the Cabinet surgeries was to help Members address issues within their wards. Members needed to attend these sessions in person.
- The timing of the Cabinet surgeries, which had taken place during the day, meaning that some Members had been unable to attend due to work commitments. The Leader commented that she would be happy to reschedule these surgeries for a later time.
- The extent to which Cabinet surgeries were receiving Officer support. The Leader clarified that Officers were not attending these meetings.
- The fact that Cheshire East Council, which had been consulted during the review, had not reported any significant financial costs arising from that authority's move to the Committee system and the reasons why Bromsgrove District Council should be expect different outcomes. Members were advised that Cheshire East Council was a large authority with a budget of circa £350 million and it was therefore in a position to accommodate greater costs than Bromsgrove District Council.
- The reasons why the group had opted to interview a Councillor representing a large unitary authority that had moved to the Committee system rather than a smaller District Council. Members were informed that the Local Government Association (LGA) had been approached for advice and they had recommended the interview.
- The outcomes of the local elections held in May 2023 and whether the move to No Overall Control could be interpreted as a sign that the public wanted change.
- The difficulties that Councillors with work commitments would have in terms of attending meetings held during the day under the Committee system.
- The value of attracting younger people to stand as candidates in local elections and the potential for daytime meetings to deter some younger people from doing so.
- The financial costs to the Council arising from a change to the Committee system and the extent to which this could be justified to the public during a cost of living crisis.
- The fact that the majority of these financial costs, particularly in terms of changes to the Council's constitution, would be one off costs. The exception to this was recognised as the staffing costs highlighted in the presentation.

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- The extent to which local residents were interested in the governance model at the Council as opposed to delivery of Council services.
- The staffing implications of the proposals for the Democratic Services team and the extent to which the financial costs involved in employing additional staff could be shared with Redditch Borough Council. Officers explained that where the workload of the officers was shared with Redditch Borough Council the other local authority would share the costs, and this was likely to occur under the hybrid Leader and Cabinet model. However, the additional staff required under the Committee system would entail extra work generated by Bromsgrove District Council alone and these costs would therefore need to be covered by this Council.
- The extent to which the financial figures provided in the report took into account the amount of time that staff in the Democratic Services team would book as time off in lieu to make up for working during the evening.
- The excessive workloads that the Democratic Services team were already managing and the extent to which the Council was reliant on the good will of team members for the effective delivery of the service.
- The risk that asking the Democratic Services team to undertake more work would lead to their departure from the authority's employment. Members commented that they valued the hard work of the team.
- The impact that the Committee system could have on Officer time, in terms of staff employed in other departments.
- The positives of the Committee system that had been highlighted by Councillor Craig Browne, Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council when he had been interviewed by the Task Group.
- The size of Cheshire East Council, as a large unitary authority with 82 Councillors, compared to the 31 Councillors serving at Bromsgrove District Council.
- The extent to which the Task Group had been provided with sufficient time to complete their investigation effectively.
- The potential for the Council to postpone making a decision on this subject to provide time for the Task Group to reconvene to interview a representative of a District Council located in the West Midlands region that was already operating the Committee system.
- The potential for Members to visit other Councils operating hybrid Leader and Cabinet models should the Council agree this as a way forward.
- The potential to monitor progress with the delivery of the proposals arising from the Task Group's investigation, should they be approved by Council.
- The implications arising from a delay to the review, including in respect of financial costs and the potential to make changes to the Council's constitution in time for the following municipal year.
- The potential for Cabinet Advisory Panels to enable backbench Councillors to have far more influence over the decision making and policy development process.

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- The possibility of operating the Cabinet Advisory Panels in a similar manner to the Finance and Budget Working Group, which Members highlighted as an example of good practice.
- The difficulties that the Council already experienced trying to appoint Members to serve on Licensing Sub-Committee meetings, which were held during the day and the fact that these challenges would be even greater under the Committee system.
- The potential for political party group leaders to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ensure the longevity of the proposed new ways of working under a hybrid Leader and Cabinet model. Whilst Members noted that the Council's future approach to operating could not be fettered, an MoU would help to provide Members with assurance that there was cross-party support to continue with these working arrangements for the remainder of their terms of office.
- The potential to also make changes to the Council's constitution and to agree working protocols that would make it difficult for unilateral changes to be forced through to the system in future.
- The frustrations that backbench Councillors experienced when they were serving in a Council that had a Leader and Cabinet governance model.
- The requirement for there to be more delegations made to officers under the Committee system and how this would operate in practice. Officers clarified that this would be needed to ensure that there was sufficient speed in the decision-making process to enable the Council to function effectively. Delegations to Officers would be recorded in the Council's Scheme of Delegations.
- The power that a majority group would continue to have in respect of decisions taken at the Council regardless of the governance model in place.
- The importance of the Council's culture, including the political culture, and Members' behaviour in relation to how the governance system operated, regardless of the governance model.
- The important role of the Overview and Scrutiny process in enabling backbench Councillors to challenge Cabinet Members' decisions.
- The slow speed of the decision-making process that had occurred at the Council under the Committee system prior to the change to the Leader and Cabinet model in 2001.
- The beneficial impact that an opposition Chairman of Council had had on the tone of Council meetings since the local elections held in May 2023.

Members concluded the briefing by thanking the Members of the Governance Systems Task Group for their hard work. Thanks were also extended to officers as well as to Ms Cath Buckley, from the CfGS, for the support she had provided throughout the review.

ACTION: Clarification to be provided as to the last time members of the leading group was appointed as the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board respectively.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, S. A. Robinson, J. D. Stanley and D. G. Stewart (substitute).

Observers: Councillor S. J. Baxter, Councillor S. R. Colella, and Councillor P. J. Whittaker.

Officers: Mr P. Carpenter, Mrs. C. Felton, Ms J. Willis, Mr M. Austin, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mr. M. Sliwinski

31/23

GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board presented the Governance Systems Task Group final report for the consideration of Members. In doing so it was highlighted that the Governance Systems Task Group had been established as a result of a Motion agreed at a Full Council meeting held on 24th May 2023. The membership of the Task Group consisted of five Members from all parties across the Council. The timelines of the Task Group had been adhered to and the recommendations presented were to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and by Cabinet at its meeting on 13th September 2023. There was then an opportunity for all members to consider the report and the recommendations at an Extraordinary meeting of the Council on 20th September 2023.

In considering the report some Members raised concerns regarding the length of time the proposed change in governance structure to a hybrid Leader and Cabinet model would be in place. Members felt that any changes should be in place for at least a four year period. Officers explained that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) could be put in place as part of any agreed changes in respect of the hybrid Cabinet and Leader model as recommended within the report. The MoU would be introduced between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years. This information would be included in the Task Group recommendations.

Councillor R. Hunter suggested that an additional recommendation be made in order for the Task Group to consider further evidence from a local authority within the West Midlands that currently operated a committee system. It was noted that there were at least two such Councils within Warwickshire of a similar size and geographical location to Bromsgrove District Council. Councillor Hunter stated that it would be useful to better understand how these Councils worked under the committee system and how successful this system had been. Furthermore, it was noted that as a result of the local elections held in May 2023 Bromsgrove District Council was currently under 'No Overall Control' and that this needed to be considered when looking at the governance structure of the Council for the future.

Some Members raised concerns regarding the costs involved in implementing a Committee System and whether this provided value for money for residents of the District.

Furthermore, it was noted by some Members that an additional recommendation could cause delays that would impact on any implementation measures that needed to be undertaken if any change of governance structure was agreed. This would particularly delay the large amount of work Officers needed to carry out in order to prepare for any change to the structure prior to implementation in May 2024.

It was noted that any further recommendation was not designed to disrupt the investigation but merely be an opportunity to look at all possible evidence. Members suggested that a monitoring system could potentially be put in place in order to understand the success of any future governance model once implemented.

During a detailed discussion, Members were reminded that a representative from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) had been present at all meetings of the Task Group in order to provide detailed information to Members in respect of all governance models for local authorities. It was stated that there was a large body of evidence to suggest that there was not a 'better' model for a Council to adopt. It was important that any structure implemented; Leader and Cabinet model, hybrid Leader and Cabinet model or Committee System worked best for that specific Council. Some Members reported that the current structure, following the local elections, had so far been successful and there had been greater engagement of all parties particularly with backbench members.

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Overview and Scrutiny Board
11th September 2023

Following the discussion, and as outlined in the preamble above, Councillor R. Hunter proposed the following additional recommendation:

‘That the Task Group reconvene to consider the evidence from at least one second tier local authority that had a Committee System before finalising its recommendation.’

Councillor S. Robinson seconded the proposal.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was lost.

In concluding the consideration of the report, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board thanked the Members of the Task Group and all Officers involved in the investigation. It was particularly noted that Ms C. Buckley, the CfGS representative at Task Group meetings, had provided invaluable assistance throughout the investigation. Members agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to Ms. Buckley in recognition of her support throughout the process.

RECOMMENDED that

Bromsgrove District Council should have a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model from May 2024 onwards. To achieve this model, the Council should do the following:

- a) Agree changes to the Council’s constitution during the 2023/24 municipal year, as detailed in the report.
- b) Introduce working protocols designed to embed more collegiate working in the Council’s governance culture.
- c) Introduce Cabinet Advisory Panels.
- d) Take action to improve communication with Members.
- e) Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years.

The meeting closed at 7.32 p.m.

Chairman

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Recommendation from the Cabinet Meeting that took place on 13th September 2023

Governance Systems Task Group

RECOMMENDED that Bromsgrove District Council should have a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model from May 2024 onwards, and as detailed in the preamble above, to be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Board after 6 months. To achieve this model, the Council should do the following:

- a) Agree changes to the Council's constitution during the 2023/24 municipal year, as detailed in the Task Group report;
- b) Introduce working protocols designed to embed more collegiate working in the Council's governance culture;
- c) Introduce Cabinet Advisory Panels;
- d) Take action to improve communication with Members;
- e) Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years; and
- f) A review to take place after 6 months by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

13TH SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, C. B. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Also in attendance: Councillor P. M. McDonald (via Microsoft Teams) and Councillor R. J. Hunter

Observers: Councillor S. T. Nock

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. P. Carpenter, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill (via Microsoft Teams), Mrs. H. Mole, Mr. M. Austin and Mrs. P. Ross

27/23

GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS TASK GROUP REPORT

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor P. M. McDonald, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, addressed the Cabinet with regard to the Governance Systems Task Group Report and the Recommendation from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 11th September 2023; as detailed on Supplementary Documentation 3 agenda pack.

Councillor McDonald informed the Cabinet that the Governance Systems Task Group had kept to their allotted timescale and had delivered their report.

The Task Group had received presentations from Councillor Craig Browne, Deputy Leader, Cheshire East Council, who's authority had changed over to the Committee System from the Leader Cabinet; and Mr. Ian Parry, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).

Councillor McDonald stated that following on from a Comparative Analysis being carried out between the Committee System and a Hybrid System based on the present governance system in operation at the Council; the Task Group had concluded that we were very lucky to have achieved the current Hybrid System. The best bespoke system which enabled everyone, including opposition Members to be involved.

It was estimated that the cost to the Council, including the design principles, to move to a Committee System would be circa £200k, and it was felt that it would be ridiculous to spend this amount of money. Hence the Recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th September 2023.

The Leader took the opportunity to express her thanks to Councillor McDonald and Task Group Members for their thorough investigation and the time they had invested over the summer months.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members, Councillor McDonald explained that with regard to the Cabinet Advisory Panels being introduced, this would provide all Members, including Back Benchers, with an opportunity to get involved and to put recommendations forward to the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders.

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services explained that any Sub-Committee could be created in an advisory capacity and would be able to look at the Forward Plan and any other items. Including items that existed on the Cabinet Working Group Work Programme or items they considered should be included on the Cabinet Working Group Work Programme. An advisory panel would help shape the Cabinet Working Group Work Programme and would be able to put forward any recommendations to the Cabinet.

Councillor S. J. Baxter suggested that a review of Cabinet Advisory Panels should be included in the Recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th September 2023.

In response Councillor McDonald stated that the Task Group had considered this and had suggested that it would be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board after a six month period.

Councillor McDonald responded to further questions and clarified that Cabinet Advisory Panels would not be talking strategically. It would be up to Portfolio Holders to look at topics and then circulate those topics to all Council Members, who could then decide if they were specifically interested in a particular topic and would like to sit on a Cabinet Advisory Panel.

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services commented that it was important that the work undertaken by the Task Group and the model they saw, would need Members to be involved.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor R. J. Hunter addressed the Cabinet.

Councillor Hunter gave his thanks to the Leader for inviting him to attend the meeting, in order to make a last appeal to the Cabinet before Full Council on 20th September 2023.

Councillor Hunter continued and in doing so stated that both he and his Group were sympathetic to the Committee System being adopted. He was unable to agree with the Recommendations of the Task Group as they did not represent a significant improvement.

Councillor Hunter questioned Recommendations a) and b) and highlighted that this did not represent a step forward it was just the status quo. He had been disappointed where decisions have been made with his Group not being consulted with.

In response the Leader stated that whilst it was good practice to have an Opposition Group Leader as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board; there was nothing currently in the Constitution that required this.

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services explained that the Constitution was pained to 'fetter' to determine the administrative arrangements, but the Council could introduce a 'Memorandum of Understanding' where working practices were clearly defined for Council to agree. Changes had been necessary to date due to the results of the recent Elections and there was Cross Party dissatisfaction with the working arrangements in place previously.

Councillor Hunter then referred to Recommendation c) and stated that there were already specific groups – Strategic Planning and Climate Change, therefore he did not understand the point of introducing Cabinet Advisory Panels and could not see how this moved us forward.

The Leader took the opportunity to respond and highlighted that Cabinet Advisory Panels provided an opportunity for all Members to commit. The culture at Council meetings had changed and it was about Members all working together, to take things on board and to listen with interest. Breaking down barriers and instigating involvement and change.

Councillor Hunter further stated that there was no binding vote, nothing that shared power and it was a 'Gentleman's Agreement'. It was a missed opportunity as it was fundamentally a Cabinet Model and to reinforce a model that was not fit for purpose and did not move us on.

Hiding behinds costs of £200k, yet the Task Group report showed costs of £80k and £40k if we stayed with the status quo. Cheshire East Council talked about the improvements that the Committee System had brought to the authority and that it had been cost neutral, so he did not accept the cost implications of £200k. No-one had asked about reducing the number of meetings and there was an assumption that Members would ask for higher allowances to attend additional meetings under a Committee System. Members were being pushed into making a decision with the September deadline given. He was very disappointed with the process and outcome, as there was evidence from only one authority. He had put forward two other Local Authorities but they were never considered, so he considered that it was not a thorough review as not enough evidence was heard from other authorities who had gone through this process. Therefore, his Group would not back down, they may be a small Group, but there was also a significant number of Members that were not happy, so he would suggest looking again. The Recommendations would not fundamentally change things at this Council.

In response the Leader stated that we had had significant change at the Council. Councillor McDonald informed the Cabinet that at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 11th September, Board Members had discussed Councillor Hunter's motion and reasons and tonight the Task Group did not accept what he was saying. The ballot box had decided who had the largest control of the Council. The bespoke Hybrid system would be included and embedded in the Constitution, to the benefit of opposition groups, and would not just be a 'Gentleman's Agreement'.

Councillor McDonald continued and explained that where the Constitution could not be changed, working practices were looked at; and we would have had to delegate more power to officers. Given the potential increase in meetings under a Committee System, all Members would need to be prepared to attend meetings during the day and not everyone could attend or lose income having to attend daytime meetings. He did not think that Members were being railroaded into making a decision. The Task Group had ensured that meetings were positive, rational and well attended by Task Group Members; hence keeping to the timelines, as all Task Group Members turned up for meetings. The Hybrid System was a bespoke system that suited Bromsgrove District Council and Chairman would be supported by it being embedded into the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Baxter commented that previously if she wanted to achieve anything she would talk to the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders. We were

now embedding a process enabling all Members to influence decisions. At the first Full Council meeting we were all finding our feet with the new administration and some Members knew the failings of the previous system.

Members further commented that the £200k costs had been explained and were the set up costs. Members agreed that decisions should be made to the benefit of residents which the Task Group report stipulated 'Putting the Residents at the Centre of all Decisions'. The Task Group report highlighted the best model and pragmatic model for the Council; and was not considered in a 'mad rush', but in a considered timeframe. The results of the Task Group would be considered at Full Council, and the Overview and Scrutiny Board had done exactly what Council had asked.

For clarity the Leader read out the Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendations on the subject of the Governance Systems Task Group's report, as agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 11th September 2023.

RECOMMENDED that Bromsgrove District Council should have a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model from May 2024 onwards, and as detailed in the preamble above, to be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Board after 6 months. To achieve this model, the Council should do the following:

- a) Agree changes to the Council's constitution during the 2023/24 municipal year, as detailed in the Task Group report;
- b) Introduce working protocols designed to embed more collegiate working in the Council's governance culture;
- c) Introduce Cabinet Advisory Panels;
- d) Take action to improve communication with Members;
- e) Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years; and
- f) A review to take place after 6 months by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

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Cabinet
13th September 2023

Prior to the next agenda item being introduced, Councillor McDonald asked for it to be noted that at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th September 2023 it was agreed that all Senior Officers would attend the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 16th October 2023. All Council Members would also be invited to attend for the Agile Working Policy to be explained.

The meeting closed at 7.59 p.m.

Chairman