

# Committee Model Review Group

28 November 2024



**Report of:** Director – Legal and Democratic Services

**Title:** Overview of Committee Model Review

**Ward:** All

## **Recommendations:**

That the Committee Model Review Group notes the contents of this report.

## **The significant issues in the report are:**

This report provides background information about the establishment of the Committee Model of governance in Bristol and an overview of the terms of reference and the key themes that will be considered as part of the review of the Committee Model of governance.



## 1. Summary

The Council adopted the Committee Model of governance with effect from 6 May 2024. During the preparations for the new governance arrangements, it was envisaged that there would be a review of the new arrangements in the autumn of 2024. At its meeting on 8 October 2024, Full Council resolved to establish a Committee Model Review Group to undertake the review of the Council's governance arrangements.

This purpose of this report is to provide background information about the establishment of the Committee Model of governance in Bristol and an overview of the terms of reference and the key themes that will be considered as part of the review.

## 2. Establishment of the Committee Model of governance

During 2022-23, a significant amount of cross-party work and public engagement was carried out to develop and structure the arrangements for the Committee Model of governance. This work was undertaken through a series of monthly public meetings of the Committee Model Working Group during 2023 and considered a range of matters relating to the new arrangements, including the following key areas of governance.

- The structure and responsibilities of Policy Committees were agreed, broadly mirroring the themes in the Council's Corporate Strategy.
- The responsibilities of Full Council were defined, which included the arrangements in respect of legal, civic and customary matters.
- The roles and responsibilities of all elected Members were set out including the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chairs and Vice-chairs of Committees, Party Group Leaders, Party Group Whips, Party Group Leads, the Lord Mayor, and Deputy Lord Mayor.
- The thresholds for key-decision making for Policy Committees were agreed as a financial threshold of £500,000 expenditure or savings or a significant impact on two or more wards in the City.
- Arrangements to publish Forward Plans on a monthly basis for Policy Committees were established.
- Weekly briefings for the Chairs and Vice-chairs of Policy Committees were put in place and agenda setting meetings for Party Group Leads for each Policy Committee were also arranged.
- The procedural arrangements for Policy Committees were developed, including procedures for the development of the Council's budget.
- The rules for Member Forum, Public Forum and the Petitions Scheme were revised.
- It was decided that a separate scrutiny function would not be a part of the new arrangements on the basis that scrutiny would take place in Policy Committees.
- An Escalation Panel was introduced to escalate and review decisions to ensure robust decision-making.
- The arrangements for local decision-making through Area Committees were revised and additional responsibilities for Area Committees were identified.
- Schemes of delegation to officers were reviewed, including the arrangements for emergency decision-making.
- Key external partnerships were considered, for example the One City partnerships.
- The Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct for Members was adopted, and the Member-Officer Protocol was updated.

Once the work of the Committee Model Working Group was completed the new governance

arrangements were set out in an updated Constitution which was reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently adopted by Full Council.

### **3. Terms of Reference of Committee Model Review Group**

At the Full Council meeting on 8 October 2024, the terms of reference for the Review Group were agreed. The terms of reference for the Review Group provide the key areas of focus. Each of these areas of review will be the subject of their own detailed reports as part of the Work Programme for the Review Group. However, some of the specific issues that will be included are set out below.

#### **Leadership, functions, roles and structure of Committees**

This will consider the roles and responsibilities of the Policy Committees and the specific responsibilities that councillors have, for example the roles of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council or the Chair and Vice Chair of a Committee. It will also consider whether any changes are required to the structure of committees or the responsibilities that each committee has.

#### **Policy Development and Task Groups**

Each Policy Committee has the opportunity to undertake policy development work, and to establish up to 2 task and finish groups in each municipal year. The review will consider the role and effectiveness of policy development and task and finish activity through Policy Committees, sub-committees and task and finish groups.

#### **Report writing e.g. options papers**

The preparation of reports and the engagement with councillors as part of the development of Policy Committee reports, including the preparation of options in reports will be reviewed. This will also consider the procedures for amendments to reports for committee meetings.

#### **Briefings and agenda setting procedures**

The briefings for Chairs and Vice-chairs of committees, the preparation of agendas for committees and the cross-party working arrangements will be reviewed. This will include a review of the timings of briefings and the attendance of councillors at briefings.

#### **Public Participation**

The way in which members of the public can participate in the Council's public meetings will be reviewed.

#### **Local decision making**

The implementation of the new arrangements for local decision-making through Area Committees will be considered. This will include the role of Area Committees, the role of councillors as part of Area Committees, and the decisions that Area Committees are empowered to make.

#### **Budget setting processes**

There will be an opportunity to reflect on the process for the development of the Council's budget and to identify whether any changes will be required for the development of the budget for 2025/26.

#### **Delegations to officers**

The oversight of delegated decision-making by Councillors and the way in which delegated decisions are made by officers will be reviewed to ensure that the processes that are in place are robust and effective.

These are the principal areas of review as set out in the terms of reference. However, this is not an

exhaustive list and there may be other issues that the Review Group considers should be covered as part of the review.

#### **4. Outcomes from the Review**

It is anticipated that the Review Group will report back to Full Council in May 2025 with any findings from the review. If there are any changes to the Council's Constitution, these will need to be considered by the Audit Committee before being recommended to Full Council for approval.

#### **5. Recommendation**

That the Committee Model Review Group notes the contents of this report.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

#### **Background Papers:**

None