

## **Committee Model Review Group - Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Attendees:** Councillor Guy Poultney (Chair), Councillor Richard Eddy, (Vice-Chair), Councillor Andrew Brown, Councillor Heather Mack, Councillor Kaz Self, Councillor Kye Dudd, and Councillor Lisa Stone.

### **1. Welcome, Introductions, and Safety Information**

The Chair welcomed those present, and introductions were made.

It was noted that membership of the Review Group had been amended with Councillor Stone replacing Councillor Bryher.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies received.

### **3. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes from the previous meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were approved as a correct record.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the previous meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February be approved as a correct record.

### **5. Public Forum**

The following public forum was received for the meeting.

#### **Questions**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>Name</b>
PQ01	Suzanne Audrey

#### **Statements**

<b>Ref No</b>	<b>Name</b>
PS01	Dan Ackroyd
PS02	Suzanne Audrey

Statement PS01 was referred to the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee.

### **6. Escalation Panel**

Members received an introduction to the report from the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and discussed the information provided. The key points made were as follows:

- The Group considered the number of Councillors required to request that a decision be referred to the Escalation Panel and agreed that this should remain at the current number of 10.
- Members went on to consider whether the 10 Members needed to be from more than one Group. After some discussion and a divergence of views it was agreed that the

existing arrangement of 10 Members be retained, with no requirement that they be from at least two parties.

- The format for Escalation Panel meetings was discussed. It was suggested that limiting the number of signatories who were invited to address the Escalation Panel would be a way of making the process appear less adversarial but on balance the Review Group agreed not to introduce this restriction.
- Members discussed the deadline for requesting that a decision be referred to the Escalation Panel, noting that it was 5 clear working days from the date of publication of the decision, not when the decision was made. It was agreed that the Constitution would be amended to reflect this.

## **RESOLVED**

- That the current arrangements in relation to Escalation Panel as set out in the Council's Constitution remain unchanged, with the exception of the wording around deadlines for referring a decision to the Escalation Panel which would be amended to clarify that it was 5 clear working days from the date of publication of a decision.

## **7. Public Forum Arrangements**

Members received an introduction to the report from the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and went on to consider and comment on the information provided. The key points made were as follows:

- Some of the arrangements around public forum, such as whether the time available to hear submissions, could be changed under the custom practice arrangements around chair's discretion. It was agreed that this should be clearly stated within the Constitution. In view of this, Members agreed that it wasn't necessary to extend public forum time from 30 to 60 minutes.
- It was noted that members of the public could find it difficult to speak in public meetings and agreed that Chairs should be reminded they could apply leniency for individual speaking time limits where appropriate.
- Members noted that the responses to most public forum questions were published an hour before the relevant committee meeting, with the exception of Full Council, which were published following the meeting. In view of this it was agreed that Full Council public forum responses should also be published in advance of the meeting.
- Members discussed the definitions used when rejecting public forum statements and questions and the use of the term 'frivolous' as set out in the Council's Constitution. It was agreed that 'frivolous' be removed. It was also agreed that a record of the reasons for ruling out public forum submissions would be kept by Democratic Services.
- Members discussed the written responses for public forum questions. It was confirmed that a variety of officers input into the draft responses and provide advice, and Policy Chairs review this and make any amendments where necessary.
- A Member raised Member petitions to Full Council, suggesting that requirement to have at least 20 signatories on a member petition be removed. It was agreed that this would be reviewed and brought back to the Review Group for decision at the next meeting.
- As the Working Group did not resolve all aspects relating to options around public forum, it was agreed that a further report would be brought to the next meeting.

## **RESOLVED**

- That the Constitution sets out clearly that Chairs have discretion to increase the minimum time spent for Public Forum.
- That the term frivolous be removed from the list of grounds for ruling out public forum.
- That Democratic Services retain a record of the grounds for ruling out public forum.
- That officers bring an updated report setting out further options for Public Forum arrangements to the next meeting.

## **8. Delegations to officers**

The report was deferred until the next meeting.

## **RESOLVED**

- That this item be deferred to the next meeting.