

## Committee Model Working Group – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Minutes

**Attendees:** Councillor Jenny Bartle (Chair), Councillor Geoff Gollop (Vice-Chair), Councillor Nicola Beech, Councillor Marley Bennett, Councillor Gary Hopkins, Councillor Mark Weston (substituting for Councillor Eddy), Councillor Tim Kent, Councillor Mark Bradshaw (substituting for Councillor Holland), Councillor Lorraine Francis, Councillor Martin Fodor (substituting for Councillor Makawi), Councillor Steve Pearce, and Councillor Guy Poultney.

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

The Chair welcomed those present and introductions were made.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from;

- Councillor Makawi, substituted by Councillor Fodor
- Councillor Eddy, substituted by Councillor Weston
- Councillor Holland, substituted by Councillor Bradshaw.

### 3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. Minutes from the previous meeting and decisions log

The minutes from the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Members noted the decision log.

### Public Forum

The following public forum questions and statements were received for the meeting.

No.	Name	Questions (and answers)
PQ 01	Clive Stevens	<p>Q1. Time needs to be set aside another day for discussion on the working of the Escalation Panel process which may be triggered in a timely manner by a group of councillors who disagree for good reason with a committee decision (to be made or made). I read in Agenda 6 (item 4) that officers have given an example of needing 10 signatories, some cross party, to bring an issue to the Escalation Panel. Are the requirements of 10 signatories and cross party just “random” suggestions or have they been researched and are being put forward as considered proposals?</p> <p><b>A1. The proposals in the report relating to the number of signatories and the need for cross-party support for escalation are only suggestions for the Working Group to consider. There may be alternative views about the criteria to refer decisions to the Escalation Panel</b></p>
PQ 02	Sian Ellis-Thomas	<p>Q2. Can the committee please explain how the new committee system model will hold Councillors to account when there are serious or multiple accounts of misconduct against them?</p> <p><b>A2. Under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to adopt a Code of Conduct for councillors. This will continue to be the case under the Committee model of governance. The current Code of Conduct will be the subject of review at a future meeting of the Working Group. The current procedure for the consideration of complaints against councillors sets out the potential sanctions that can be imposed when there is a breach of the Code of Conduct and it is anticipated that similar arrangements will be in place under the Committee model of governance. The current potential sanctions are as follows:</b></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To Report on findings to Full Council i.e. “naming and shaming”.</b></li> <li>• <b>To Recommend to a Group Leader that the member concerned be removed from any committee or sub-committee.</b></li> <li>• <b>To recommend, In relation to any members of the executive that the member concerned be removed from the Executive.</b></li> <li>• <b>to recommend the Monitoring Officer to arrange appropriate training for the member concerned.</b></li> <li>• <b>to recommend removal of any member concerned from any outside body appointments.</b></li> <li>• <b>to require the withdrawal of Council facilities e.g. use of computer or internet.</b></li> <li>• <b>to exclude a member from the Council’s offices or other premises except for the purpose of attending formal meetings.</b></li> </ul>
PQ 03	Sian Ellis-Thomas	<p>Q3. Given the current rather lame sanctions that are in place, can the committee also explain how improvements to sanctions for misconduct can be such that they result in a significant incentive for better adherence to the Code?</p> <p><b>A3. The Working Group may wish to review the potential sanctions that might be imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct for councillors when it’s reviewed in due course.</b></p>

Statements	
Number	Name
PS01	Sian Ellis-Thomas
PS02	Clive Stevens
PS03	Suzanne Audrey
PS04	David Redgewell and Gordon Richardson

In response to PQ03, it was confirmed that the work programme from August to May 2024 would be confirmed at the July public meeting.

Following PQ02, a supplementary question was asked seeking to clarify whether members of the public could input into the content of the Member Code of Conduct and any relevant sanctions which would be considered by the CMWG in autumn 2023. It was confirmed that public forum could be submitted for public meetings or emails could be sent directly to [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk). Members went on to discuss the LGA Model Code of Conduct and were advised that a report would be brought to a future meeting to consider whether to adopt this in due course.

**RESOLVED:** That the public forum be noted.

### 5. Council Procedures under the Committee Model of Governance

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which set out a variety of details for the Group to discuss. The Group went onto consider the report, commenting as follows:

#### Terms of Reference of Policy Committees (including sub-committees)

- The Committee agreed with the proposal for shared Terms of Reference and common ways of working, with the caveat that each Policy Committee would have unique elements.
- The group discussed the future production of the Corporate Plan, noting that the existing Plan would remain in place until a replacement could be agreed at Full Council.

- The Director of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that any decision between £100k and £500k (i.e., below the 'Key Decision' threshold) would be made by officers in consultation with the Chair or Vice-Chair of each relevant Policy Committee.
- It was agreed that the agendas for the Policy Committee Chairs/Vice Chairs meetings would be shared with Members of the relevant Committee, including details of any decisions that would be considered in order to provide the opportunity for advance comment.
- The Group agreed that the Key Decision threshold should continue to include the current requirement for matters that would 'be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in two or more wards in the city.'

#### **Policy Committee Procedure Rules**

- The Committee agreed they would need to consider the options for enabling additional public forum contributions, such as amendments to publication dates, amending speaking times and production of increased information for the public about how to engage.
- It was agreed that Public Forum submissions for the Policy Committees must relate to the Terms of Reference for each body but did not need to be restricted to items on the agenda.
- The Group discussed the Finance Sub-Committee and the breadth of work it would be responsible for. In view of this it was agreed that the Sub-Committee be a standing body.
- Members were reminded that Policy Committee Chairs would have a casting vote. If the Chair does not wish to exercise this casting vote, the decision falls.
- Members requested that relevant briefings from officers were scheduled into the Committees work programmes, to ensure Members had the right expertise to make informed decisions.
- It was agreed that more detail should be added regarding the Forward Plans including that items be added with as much notice as possible.

#### **Escalation Panel Procedure Rules**

- Members considered the proposals in relation to the Escalation Panel and agreed that in order to escalate a decision 10 or more Councillors would need to request this, from Members of at least two political groups. They also agreed that the original decision makers could not be involved in reviewing the decision.

#### **RESOLVED**

- There must be 10 Member Signatories, from at least 2 Party Groups for a decision to be escalated.
- That Escalation Panel Members must not have been involved in making the original decision.

#### **Forward Plan and Decision Pathway**

- Forward Plans will be developed by regular cross-party workshop meetings.
- Members were reminded that public consultation happens on a variety of policies.
- Where Committees want to see a specific report or decision in more detail, they can request it comes to the relevant Policy Committee.
- Members would like to see multiple proposed options in the reports, with an officer recommendation. This could also include options that have been considered but are not feasible.
- The group requested a separate diagram showing how Policy Development occurs and where Member involvement sits within this.

## **Petitions Scheme**

The Committee discussed a variety of options for changing the threshold for a petition. The Working Group agreed that 1000 signatures would be required for a Policy Committee debate and 3500 signatures for a Full Council.

It was noted that any petitions that didn't meet the threshold for debate could still be submitted as public forum in the usual way.

**RESOLVED:** That petition debates could take place at both Policy Committees and Full Council. The respective thresholds would be 1000 and 3,500 signatures.

### **6. Work Programme - for noting only**

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

### **7. Verbal Update from Area Committee Working Group**

Members were advised that the Working Group, which was chaired by Councillor Tim Kent, had met twice to date, with further meetings planned into the early autumn. Various options to expand local decision making were being explored and further updates would be provided in due course.