

Committee Model Working Group

28 July 2023



Report of: Director – Legal and Democratic Services

Title: External Partnerships

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Director – Legal and Democratic Services

Recommendations:

That the Committee Model Working Group considers and makes recommendations in respect of the matters raised in this report.

The significant issues in the report are:

This report sets out the different types of external partnerships that the Council has in place and how these could be managed under the Committee Model of governance.



1. Summary

As part of the preparations for the Committee Model of governance, there are a number of detailed matters that the Working Group needs to consider, which are part of the Work Programme for the Working Group during 2023.

This report considers a range of matters relating to external partnerships that the Council has in place and how these might be managed under the Committee Model of governance. This report also provides two specific briefings relating to the One City arrangements and the West of England Combined Authority.

The Working Group will need to make recommendations about the matters raised in this report. Those recommendations, together with recommendations from other meetings of the Working Group, will be reported to Full Council in due course, where a final decision will be taken regarding the arrangements for the Committee Model of governance.

2. Detail of report

The Council has a range of external partnerships and relationships with other individuals and organisations. Some of those relationships are currently maintained by the Mayor and Cabinet members. There are also external partnerships and relationships with a wide range of outside bodies and all councillors have the opportunity to sit on these outside bodies. Appendix 1 sets out the detail of the current external partnerships and relationships and gives an indication as to how some of these partnerships will be maintained under the Committee Model of governance, for example the Chairs of Policy Committees will have a key role to play in maintaining a number of these external partnerships and relationships.

3. One City

The Working Group received a briefing on the current One City arrangements at its meeting in May, noting that the council is a participant and majority funder, rather than the owner, of the One City Approach. Members noted the distinction between the city-wide strategic planning focus of One City and the grassroots community partnership working and local decision making, and the requirement for the city as a system to benefit from each of these facets of partnership working.

Members were mindful of the need to engage with partner institutions and of the benefits brought by working well together with other institutions in the city and wider region. The Working Group has expressed a desire to send a clear message to partners about the council's intention to continue working collectively and constructively on shared long-term aims for the city and its immediate challenges.

Since the May meeting of the Working Group, vacant roles within the City Office have been successfully recruited to on a fixed-term basis after partners agreed to continue co-funding the model. 2.6FTE post-holders have now joined the City Office on secondment, and a fixed-term Head of City Office is anticipated to join in early September.

With a wide range of different partnerships, networks, stakeholders, groups and boards operating within the wider governance structures of both the city and City Council, Members expressed a wish

for a thorough review, clarification and classification exercise which explored the roles, responsibilities, functions and powers of different groups, including the Mayoral Equality Commissions. The Working Group noted that this would be a complex process and permanent future arrangements across all models of partnership working would need to be a matter for a future Administration following the adoption of the Committee System.

With partnership funding of One City agreed in principle, staff members available to assist reviews, a stated desire by the council to continue close partnership working and an existing agreement to work with equalities groups in the spirit of ‘nothing about us without us’, Officers recommend that the Working Group makes an in-principle recommendation to continue participation in the One City Approach and hosting the City Office for the 2024/25 municipal year, subject to the budget setting process for that financial year confirming that council funding is available. This would provide continuity to strategic planning and partnership working, whilst also providing the staff resources required to convene partners to participate in a further review. An alternative would be a fuller review of the arrangements and provision of formal options prior to (or in time for) May 2024, but this is not the preferred option because any such review would benefit from both the City Office staff and the future Administration having longer to experience the system working in practice and to co-design future options with those affected by them.

The Working Group is invited to provide its view on these options.

4. West of England Combined Authority & West of England Joint Committee

One of the specific partnerships that the Council has is as a constituent authority of the West of England Combined Authority and the West of England Joint Committee. The Working Group will receive a briefing on how the West of England Combined Authority functions and how the Council interacts with the Combined Authority and the West of England Joint Committee, as set out in Appendix 2.

The West of England Combined Authority Committee is chaired by the Metro Mayor, and is made up of the Leaders and Mayor from our three constituent councils: Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council.

The West of England Joint Committee is made up of the Leaders from the West of England councils: Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and North Somerset Council. It is chaired by one of the leaders who has been elected to chair the meeting. The Chair of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) also attends committee meetings in a non-voting capacity.

The Working Group will need to consider how the Council will interact with the Combined Authority under the Committee Model of governance and who will be appointed to represent the Council at formal meetings of the Combined Authority and what decision-making authority they will have when attending meetings of the West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee.

The Working Group will also need to consider who will be appointed to represent the Council at the following Combined Authority Boards:

- Infrastructure Board

- Business Board
- Skills Board

These Boards provide strategic guidance and advice to the West of England Combined Authority, Joint West of England Committee and Local Enterprise Partnership on Housing, Planning & Transport, Business and Skills matters.

The Advisory Boards do not make decisions and operate within the remit approved by the West of England Combined Authority or Joint Committee as appropriate. These Boards principally provide direction and support in relation to the development delivery and implementation of policies, strategies schemes being promoted by the West of England Combined Authority or Joint Committee as appropriate. They also provide specialist and technical advice on projects and investment programmes. The Boards are an important forum where political representatives (principally Members representing the administration from the Unitary Authorities) can meet to identify opportunities for joint working and to discuss management of key challenges. This provides Members who are chosen to represent their administrations with oversight of projects and programmes; raising issues and giving their views to the West of England Combined Authority, Joint West of England Committee and Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Committee Model Working Group will need to consider how the Council will interact with these Advisory Boards. The Combined Authority's Constitution states that for matters that relate to the discharge of functions of the West of England Combined Authority the membership of these Advisory Boards shall be the Executive Member(s) from each of the Constituent Council who have responsibility for the Portfolio(s) relevant to the individual Advisory Board.

For matters that relate to the functions of the Joint Committee the membership shall be the Executive Member(s) from each of the Constituent Council and North Somerset who have responsibility for the Portfolio(s) relevant to the individual Advisory Board and Business

The Working Group will also need to consider how the Council engages and participates with the West of England Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is made up of 11 councillors drawn from across the three constituent councils. Its role is to review and scrutinise the work of the Combined Authority; it can also make reports or recommendations to the decision-taking committees. The Audit Committee comprises 12 members, 11 councillors drawn from across our three constituent councils and one independent member. Its role is to provide independent assurance to the Combined Authority on its governance, internal control and risk management arrangements and to oversee the statutory financial reporting process.

5. Legal and Constitutional matters

There are no specific legal or constitutional matters arising from this report.

6. Matters for the Working Group to consider

The Working Group should consider the following matters as part of the preparation for the Committee Model of governance.

1. Are the proposals for how external partnerships and relationships will be maintained appropriate?
2. Does the Working Group have any recommendations about how the One City arrangements will function under the Committee Model of governance?
3. Does the Working Group recommend that the Council continues to participate in the One City Approach and that the Council continues to host the City Office for the 2024/25 municipal year?
4. Who will be appointed to represent the Council at formal meetings of the West of England Combined Authority and the West of England Joint Committee and what powers will they have to negotiate with the Combined Authority and the other Local Authorities?
5. How will Combined Authority Business be considered by BCC members ahead of any Committee meeting?
6. How will Bristol City Council set its own strategic priorities with regards to the Combined Authority?
7. Who will attend the Combined Authority Advisory Boards?
8. How will business from the Combined Authority Boards be communicated back to BCC?
9. Who will attend LEP Board meeting on behalf of the Council?

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – External partnerships and relationships

Appendix 2 – Presentation on WECA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None