

## REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ‘THE VOICE OF THE COUNCILLOR’

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the thoughts of the Review Committee working party and details its recommendations to the Committee as a result of research into the final report of the De Montfort University and Municipal Journal councillor commission.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 13 March 2018 the Review Committee considered the Commission’s report and resolved that a working party be formed to consider ‘The Voice of the Councillor’ report and to report back to a future meeting of the Committee with its recommendations.
- 2.2 The working party has met a number of times and considered the parts of the report that related to the work of the Council. Over the course of these meetings the working party drilled down into the issues and came to the conclusion that there were two areas that could meet the objectives of the report authors and assist Rochford District Council.
- 2.3 Both areas would give a voice to all Councillors on the Council and would allow them all a possible say in the formation of policies and initiatives that the Council instigates.

### 3 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (O&S) POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 It was noted that a key part of an O&S Committee’s work was usually policy development and this had formed a part of the O&S training received. There is reference to this part of O&S work in the Council’s Constitution, an extract of which is reproduced below.

#### 9. Policy Review and Development

(b) In relation to the development of the Council’s approach to other matters not forming part of its policy and budget framework, the Review Committee may make proposals to the Executive for developments in so far as they relate to matters within its terms of reference.

(c) The Review Committee may hold enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist them in this process. It may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. It may ask witnesses to attend to address it on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.

- 3.2 In the past, recommendations were made to and by the Review Committee in respect of various policy related topics that needed looking at but this has not been the case for a number of years. Also, the Key Decisions document does not contain sufficient details of policies that are due to be implemented in the mid to long term so it is difficult to select ideas via this source.
- 3.3 The working party has concluded that the Leader could be invited to attend the Review Committee to detail the plans for the Council for the next year and beyond and suggest any areas that the Committee may like to examine in terms of possible policy changes that could improve/develop the Council's offering.
- 3.4 It would then be up to the Committee to decide what items it would be able to assist with allowing for capacity.
- 3.5 The working party felt that any policy development work could be done by the Committee as a whole, with smaller groups being formed to look at parts of the review as and when needed.

#### **4 NOTICES ON MOTION / OPPOSITION BUSINESS**

- 4.1 The working party recognised that it could be difficult for opposition Members and those that were not part of the Executive to make a detailed case in relation to a motion on notice because, at the current time, there is no facility for the production of a supporting report.
- 4.2 Currently, whilst opposition groups are allowed officer support to work up alternative ideas in respect of the budget, this does not extend to policies or ideas they may wish to put forward.
- 4.3 It was agreed that it would be useful for there to be a process that was simple and designed to give Members the chance for some support in putting forward motions when it was felt to be needed. It would be important, however, to ensure that officers were not overwhelmed with items being put forward to Full Council as motions on notice, where officer support would be of value.
- 4.4 The working party acknowledged that there was a need to be mindful of available resource. It was felt, however, that as long as items put forward could be contained within the normal duties of officers and that there was a control over how many items were put forward, there should not be any material increase in staffing costs with this initiative.
- 4.5 It was felt that it should be up to the Members putting forward a motion whether they wanted the involvement of the Portfolio Holder or not.

- 4.6 An amendment to the Council's Constitution, providing wording reflecting the above, has been formulated and is reproduced below:-

#### MOTIONS ON NOTICE

##### 13.1 Notice

Except for Motions which can be moved without notice under Rule 14, written notice of every Motion, on the authority of at least 2 Members, must be delivered to the Managing Director not later than 5 working days before the date of the meeting. These will be entered in a book open to public inspection.

##### 13.2 Motion Set Out in Agenda

Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the agenda in the order in which notice was received, unless the Member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it to a later meeting or withdraw it.

##### 13.3 Scope

Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the District.

##### 13.4 Officer Assistance

If Members considering the submission of a motion on notice require officer assistance for the preparation of supporting information to put to Council then they should contact the Managing Director at least 21 working days before the meeting to allow for preparation time with up to 3 notices per meeting depending on officer resource required.

Where officers are required to provide supporting information it will be available to the members submitting the motion at least 7 working days before the meeting and will be confined to background, factual or professional matters to be published as part of the report that sets out the motion. The availability of such information accords with the objective of adequate administrative, secretarial and research support to all Councillors irrespective of their position within the Council or their membership of the majority or minority groups.

## 5 WORKING PARTY RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed by the Working Party that the Committee **RESOLVES** that the Leader be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to detail the plans for the Council for the next year and beyond and suggest any areas that the Committee may like to examine in terms of possible policy changes that could improve/develop the Council's offering.

- 5.2 It is further proposed by the Working Party that the Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that the proposed changes to the Notices of Motion in the Constitution be adopted.