

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE:

15 MARCH 2018

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL
SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER**

ALL PARTY COUNCIL GROUPS

Reason for this Report

1. To allow the Committee to consider provision for the establishment of All Party Council Groups to discuss and promote specific issues within the Council's corporate and service priorities and increase opportunities for non-Executive Members to contribute towards policy development.

Background

2. At the Committee's meeting in October 2017, the Committee noted a suggestion from the Chair regarding the establishment of All Party Council Groups. The Committee agreed to receive a report on this matter. This is that report.
3. An All Party Council Women's Group, has been established to promote and support any elected Member who identifies as a woman, and to provide advice, guidance and networking opportunities for any elected Member who has identified as a woman. This Group had its first meeting in December 2017.

Issues

4. The Committee is invited to consider making provision for All Party Council Groups (APCGs) by approving the following draft Protocol:

ALL PARTY COUNCIL GROUPS – PROTOCOL (draft)

Purpose

The purpose of an All Party Council Group ("an APCG") is to provide opportunities for debate and promote specific issues within the Council's corporate and service priorities and increase opportunities for non-Executive Members to contribute towards policy development.

Subject matter

The subject matter for an APCG must relate to a matter for which the Council has responsibility or to the role of members or member development.

Powers / Functions

An APCG is not intended to have any formal decision making powers, but may (if it wishes) make suggestions or recommendations by letter to a relevant Cabinet member or Committee Chair; or seek to secure a debate at Council by way of a Motion promoted by a party group. (Any such Motion would count as one of the Motions allocated to the relevant party group.)

Membership

- i. The minimum number of members for an APCG shall be five members.
- ii. Membership must be open to all members of all party groups, including Independent members.
- iii. Each APCG must consist of members from more than one party group.

Procedure

- i. The members proposing to establish an APCG must notify the Monitoring Officer so that the Group is included on a register of APCGs.
 - ii. Each APCG must meet at least three times each year.
 - iii. If the APCG wishes to raise any issues formally, it may do so by writing to the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder or committee chair.
 - iv. Each APCG must produce an annual report to be circulated to all members of the Council (but not to be discussed at full Council).
 - v. In all other respects, the procedure and regulation of meetings shall be a matter for Members.
 - vi. Officer support for APCG meetings shall be limited, due to resource constraints, to booking rooms for meetings, and will not cover clerking or other administrative support (such as agenda planning or minute taking).
5. The Committee is invited to consider and provide comments on the above proposals. Members may wish to note that these proposals have been discussed and broadly agreed with party group whips.

Legal Implications

6. The proposed All Party Council Groups have no formal decision making powers, and there is therefore no legal requirement for their inclusion within the Council's Constitution. However, a Protocol setting out the agreed arrangements for such groups, as set out in the body of the report, would

ensure there is clarity and transparency for all concerned, and may be incorporated within Part 5 of the Constitution, subject to the approval of full Council.

7. As an informal working group, the statutory access to information rules applicable to decision making meetings of the Council (under Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972) do not apply, which means there is no requirement for APCG meetings and documentation to be open to the public.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and approve provision for the establishment of All Party Council Groups as set out in the report, subject to any agreed changes; and
2. Recommend to Council the incorporation of the All Party Council Groups Protocol set out in paragraph 4 of this report, subject to any agreed changes, within Part 5 of the Constitution.

DAVINA FIORE
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING
OFFICER

26th February 2018

Background papers

Constitution Committee report 'Review of Constitution', October 2017