

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2021

CONSTITUTION REVIEW

APPENDIX 1 – MEMBER ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

A questionnaire was sent to all Councillors to ask for their views on the Council constitution and how it could be improved, the response to the questionnaire is set out below.

Number of responses Received: 12

Please note some respondents did not provide a response to all questions.

Q1: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution provides guidance on how the Council provides leadership to the community in partnership with citizens, businesses, and other organisations?

8	Agree
1	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Accessible version would be of great value
- Video or easy read summary beneficial - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/LearningDisabilityAccessCommsGuidance.pdf>

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution supports the active involvement of citizens in the process of council decision making?

6	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Difficult to find on the website
- Public not aware of the document
- Exploration of Committee Structure and its benefits should be included in review

Q3: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution is easy to understand and is up to date?

2	Agree
1	Neither agree nor disagree
7	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Flow diagram on decision-making and summary of rules for people unfamiliar with Council processes
- Application of officer delegations and engagement with Cabinet Members
- Reporting of Officer decisions
- Officer obligations to report fraud
- Audit & Governance Committee duties
- Whistleblowing Policy

Q4: Do you agree that the constitution should be improved to make.....

9	the Council more transparent
6	it easier to understand
7	sure it is accurate
3	it less wordy
2	Wording gender neutral
4	Provide flow charts and illustrations
6	Utilise hyperlinks to make central document more focused

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegations

- Chairs should decide on how they are referred to
- Cabinet and Scrutiny posts require updating
- Training on Chairmanship and rules of procedure would be of use
- Consideration should be given to having an Executive Summary and FAQs

Q5: Do you agree that the language within the constitution could be improved to make it more accessible?

3	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
3	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Language should remain consistent with that of a formal document
- Language needs to be precise and accurate
- Over-simplification can lead to ambiguity

Q6: Subject to any Statutory Context which consistent use of terminology would you like to see included across the content of the Constitution:

Councillor or Member	Councillor - 6 Either - 2 Member -1
Executive or Cabinet	Cabinet - 8 Depends on which we have - 1
Citizen or member of the public or service user or resident	Resident - 8
Chief Finance Officer or Section 151	CFO - 8 Section 151 - 1

Q7: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution helps councillors to represent their constituents more effectively?

1	Agree
7	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
0	Other

Q8: Do you think the Constitution enables decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively?

3	Agree
6	Neither agree nor disagree
0	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Review of benefits of Committee Structure would be beneficial

Q9: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution ensures that those responsible for decision-making are clearly identifiable to local citizens and that they explain the reasons for decisions?

1	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegation levels

Q10: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution creates a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account?

2	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Constitution needs to be more prominent to do this effectively

Q11: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution ensures that proposals and decisions are effectively and fairly reviewed?

2	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegation levels and how reported
 - Opposition members should Chair O&S Committees
 - Audit & Governance should be considered as a O&S Committee
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Q10: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution creates a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account?

2	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Constitution needs to be more prominent to do this effectively
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Q12: Please tell us about any other comments or suggestions you have as to how the Constitution could be improved.

- Part 2 Article 4 states Full Council meets 6 times per year, is this correct and should it include Annual Council?
- All significant decisions should be referred to Councillors