

**OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN ITS FIRST NINE MONTHS**

**To:** Constitution and Ethics Committee

**Date:** 11th November 2014

**From:** LGSS Director Law, Property and Governance

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Forward Plan ref:** N/A **Key decision:** No

**Purpose:** To seek the input and comments of members of the Constitution and Ethics (C&E) Committee with regard to the proposed methodology and areas of focus for the review of the operation of the committee system at Cambridgeshire County Council over its first nine months.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to:

- a) consider the proposed approach and methodology for the review
- b) offer comments and suggestions
- c) endorse the proposed approach and timescale.

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contact</i></b>	
Name:	Quentin Baker	Name:	Cllr S Kindersley
Post:	Director of Law, Property & Governance and Monitoring Officer	Portfolio:	Chairman, Constitution and Ethics Committee
Email:	<a href="mailto:quentin.baker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">quentin.baker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:skindersley@hotmail.com">skindersley@hotmail.com</a>
Tel:	01223 727961	Tel:	01767 651982

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members of the Committee will be familiar with the background to this report but for the benefit of others the following summary is provided.
- 1.2 At its annual meeting in May 2014, following a resolution in 2013, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) resolved to convert from a Leader Cabinet form of governance to a Committee System. The detailed form and procedures of the new system had been developed over the preceding nine months in a process coordinated by the Constitution and Ethics Committee and the auspices of its role in oversight and maintenance of the Council's Constitution.
- 1.3 In recognition of the fact that any newly designed system of governance may experience unforeseen issues in operation and in addition, potential improvements may emerge, the decision to implement included an express requirement to conduct as review of the operation in its first 12 months with a view to the C&E committee considering whether to recommend any changes to the detailed governance procedures.

## **2. THE PROPOSED REVIEW**

- 2.1 This paper sets out a draft proposal for how the review should be conducted, what information it will gather and some suggested areas of focus for the review itself.

### **Method**

It is suggested that the review be conducted on the basis of information harvested from a consultation exercise involving CCC elected members and members of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team. The consultation will be conducted via a consultation questionnaire to be circulated towards the end of November. The questionnaire will consist of some questions relating to specific aspects of the system and a section for general comments. There will be a mixture of tick box/rating questions and those which seek a comment in response.

### **Particular Themes/Areas for Focus**

- 2.2 From the anecdotal information received to date in the form of comments made to Democratic Services staff and other officers a number of issues have been identified as of concern to elected members and/or officers as follows:-
  - i. The Frequency of meetings – some comments received that the number of meetings means a significant time input for members.
  - ii. The size of agendas – Some feel that some agendas have contained too much business to be properly conducted at a single meeting.
  - iii. Potential for delay in decision making.
  - iv. Cost of the system – some comments received about how much it is costing – there are a number of variables which influence the cost of the system including the number of chairmen/women, vice-chairmen/women and Spokes; number of meetings.

- v. Questions at Full Council – Comment received suggesting that this is now otiose due to the fact that questions may be asked at Service Committees.
- vi. Whether Local Members should be permitted to move amendments to motions in committees of which they aren't members.
- vii. The number and size of committees – some comment received suggesting that the committees are too large.

2.3 Members of the C&E Committee are invited to comment on these issues and extend the list or add detail to the identified issues.

2.4 The above will form the basis for the specific questions which will be supplemented by a number of questions gauging overall satisfaction with the system itself.

2.5 The consultation will be accompanied by some communication to raise awareness of the exercise an encourage people to submit responses.

2.6 The information gathered from the consultation questionnaires will be compiled into a report to be considered by the C& E Committee at its meeting in January 2015. It is suggested that part of that meeting slot is given over to a workshop to consider the content of the report and to identify what, if any, changes to the system, members of the C&E committee feel are warranted or advisable. Emerging proposals will be formulated into a recommendation for Full Council.

### **Timescale**

2.7 It is proposed to devise and circulate the consultation questionnaire at the end of November with a deadline for submission of responses by 2nd January 2015. A report containing a summary and analysis of the responses will be reported to the following C&E Committee. Depending upon the nature of any conclusions arising a further report containing recommendations will be prepared and submitted to Full Council subject to approval by C&E Committee members either at a meeting or circulated for approval outside of a meeting.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Reports and minutes of County Council May 2013 – May 2014	<a href="http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=12">http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=12</a>
Reports and minutes of Constitution and Ethics Committee	<a href="http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=59">http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=59</a>