

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**GOVERNANCE TASK GROUP**

Minutes from the Meeting of the Governance Task Group held on Tuesday, 19th November, 2019 at 2.00 pm in the Meeting Room 2-1 - Second Floor, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn

PRESENT: Councillor
Councillors I Devereux, A Kemp, G Middleton and J Moriarty

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B Long

Officers present: D Gates, L Gore and S Winter

1 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record subject to an amendment to show Councillor Kemp left the meeting prior to the decision being made on consulting parishes.

It was noted that the letter to parishes and the King's Lynn Area Committee would be distribute the following day.

The item for senior staff would be submitted to the next meeting of extended management team.

It was also agreed that the meeting scheduled for 9 December would not take place as it was election week.

2 **MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

None

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

4 **OFFICERS REPORT**

The Task Group had met to review feedback from the member workshop which had taken place on 5 November and to agree the design principles which would guide the next phase of the work programme to explore amendments to the current governance model or alternative models of governance.

Copies of the notes made on the flipboards at the workshop were considered. The following comments were made:

- Surprise at how little many members know about the processes and the council generally
- Many new members were learning from their colleagues - mentoring was useful
- Many members didn't attend the training laid on for them.
- Pre council briefings were useful for members

It was noted that an offer would be made to councillors to visit some departments in small numbers to see the roles carried out by the officers. In response to a request to know where officers sat, it was stressed that members should make an appointment to see officers rather than just arrive at a desk.

It was also noted that further training was planned to be re-run in 2020, after a questionnaire to members on what they felt they needed.

In looking at the selection of 14 potential design principles to be considered the task group made some points around the current panel process such as:

- Earlier input by Panels to future decisions and policy development was requested.
- Panels didn't always encourage individual thoughts
- Members weren't utilising the current model effectively
- Cabinet reports were not generally going through scrutiny meaning members were not aware of some issues going forward. (it was noted that this was as a result of the CfPS recommendations that this was not best practice.)
- Encouragement of panels working with cabinet members to develop policy
- Members should be able to know what policies are in existence.
- More debates should be held at council rather than being referred elsewhere.
- Standing order 34 attendees couldn't ask questions at Cabinet.
- More members should be involved in policy development/scrutiny.

The 14 design principles were put forward to which it was agreed that they were all acceptable.

The following additional principles were proposed by Councillor Moriarty and discussed:

- Traceability in terms of accountability
- cabinet portfolios mirrored by scrutiny bodies
- We are not central government, why is the authority so adversarial, co-operation should be fostered.

- All members of the opposition should know what is happening across the authority.
- Quasi cabinet – should be transparent. There is the view that items are decided before the meeting.
- SRA positions should be politically proportionate.

The additional points were discussed, and a number of the points were accepted, however the issue on the SRAs was not accepted as it was felt it was a political element, but if the cabinet structure was maintained it was agreed that the allocation of the chair and vice chair positions should be looked at.

The Chair commented that visibility of the process was important and that there was scope to provide simple views to how to do business.

Mr Huggins reminded members that political realities were important, and that the Group could look at how structures could be tailored effectively, whilst accepting the political reality, with the reality check that some members at the workshop had indicated that they did not have much more time to spend on Council work.

In moving forward, Mr Huggins agreed to look at other organisations and their structures for the task group to look at and potentially speak to. He also asked for the Members to feed back any good examples they or their groups were aware of.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

28 January 2020 at 2pm in Meeting Room 2:1

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm