

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Policy & Resources Committee

## Agenda Item 142

**Subject:** Review of the Council's Policy & Resources (Recovery)  
Sub Committee and permanent Member Working Groups

**Date of meeting:** 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Report of:** Executive Director Governance, People & Resources

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

1.1 The Report proposes changes to the Council's Constitution for approval by Policy & Resources Committee in advance of the appointment of members at annual Council. The proposals have been considered and approved by a cross-party group of members.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Committee agree to formally disband the Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee.
- 2.2 That Committee approve the changes to the Council's permanent Member Working Groups and Other Bodies set out in Appendices 1 & 2 respectively.
- 2.3 That Committee approve the amendments to the explanatory text in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution attached as Appendix 3.
- 2.4 That Committee authorises the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the changes agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee, and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend and re-publish the Council's constitutional documents to incorporate the changes.
- 2.5 That the proposed changes recommended at paras 2.1 to 2.4 inclusive come into force immediately following their approval by Policy & Resources Committee.

### **3. Context and background information**

3.1 The Council is required to keep its Constitution under review with a view to

achieving efficiency, economy and effectiveness. Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders reviewed and approved these proposals, namely Councillors Clare, Allcock and Bell.

- 3.2 It was noted by Members that the Council's Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub Committee had performed a key function at a critical time and was always intended to be time-limited. It was considered that the ongoing work of this Sub Committee would now be better directed to its parent Committee, which will be best placed to tackle Covid-related challenges alongside the other challenges of this current time (including the cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine, amongst others). The recommendation is therefore to disband the P&R (Recovery) Sub-Committee and for the work of the Sub-Committee to be undertaken by Policy & Resources Committee.
- 3.3 Members also reviewed the complete list of the Council's 32 current permanent Member Working Groups ('MWGs'), as well as those 7 bodies currently described as 'advisory bodies'. The focus of the review was to assess the number of bodies which members participate in and to consider whether a permanent MWG was the most effective approach. The following key questions were posed in relation to each:
- Does the working group serve an ongoing purpose?
  - Could it be merged with another working group?
  - Could it be converted to an ad-hoc working group and be disbanded after 6 months?
  - Can the work be absorbed into the parent committee?
  - What would be the impact of the working group ceasing to exist?
- 3.4 The list attached at Appendix 1 represents the consensus achieved regarding which of the current permanent Member Working Groups might either be discontinued or merged, and/or their functions delivered via the parent committee. This list is considered to represent the best means of rationalising the pressures on members as well as on officers and of delivering workstreams in a way which is as efficient as possible.
- 3.5 It was further noted that all groups and bodies are resource-intensive to maintain. An annual review of permanent Member Working Groups is considered to be the best means of reviewing which of the Council's groups to retain into the future. In addition, there is a key expectation that all permanent Member Working Groups - as well as all informally constituted and time-bound Task and Finish Groups - should work to a written workplan including clear objectives and timescales. That workplan should be owned by the Lead Officer and Members and will normally be reported to the parent body each year.
- 3.6 Attention was also given to the bodies currently listed as 'advisory bodies' in the Council's Constitution. It had been noted that some of the bodies listed as Member Working Groups did not in fact meet relevant criteria and that a category of 'Other Bodies' was a better way of reflecting the diverse statutory and non-statutory bodies which are listed in the Constitution as some of the

bodies which perform a consultative or partnership function. The table at Appendix 2 represents the list of Other Bodies which it is proposed be provided in the Council's Constitution, along with revised explanatory wording which is attached at Appendix 3.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 While the recommendations reflect a considered review of the current arrangements, the Committee may decide not to accept the recommendations proposed in the Report.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The proposals in this Report have been reviewed in detail by elected Members. The proposals do not represent changes to the decision-making structure or framework. As a result, it is not considered that community engagement would be appropriate.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The proposals reflect the Council's ongoing efforts to keep under review its governance arrangements so as to ensure that it uses the resources available to it in the most effective way possible. It is therefore recommended that the proposals in this Report be approved.

#### **7. Financial implications**

The disbanding of the sub-committee and changes to the working groups outlined in this report is expected to lead to a small saving in officers' and members' time. However it is not expected to result in any significant financial savings.

Name of finance officer consulted: Peter Francis      Date consulted  
29/4/22

#### **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 Policy & Resources Committee is the correct body to make the proposed changes set out here. It is intended for the changes to take effect immediately after the decision is made.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson      Date consulted 28.4.22

#### **9. Equalities implications**

The proposals in the report do not impact on those with protected characteristics. All matters for decision which would have been taken at P&R (Recovery) Sub Committee will be taken to Policy & Resources Committee and there is no loss of democratic accountability or change in delegations as a result of these proposals. The Member Working Groups

that have been merged or discontinued were all Groups attended by elected Members only and these Groups are internal meetings of Councillors. The work of the Member Working Groups is reported to the relevant decision-making Committee, which meets in public.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

By ensuring that only those meetings that are necessary are taking place, this will minimise the need for travel and minimise energy consumption.

### **Supporting Documentation**

#### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – list of permanent working groups

Appendix 2 – list of 'Other Bodies'

Appendix 3 – Part 4 – extracts (tracked changes version)