

## Constitution Focus Group

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**MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2022 AT WEST WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

**Present:**

Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Graham Wright (Virtual), Cllr Jon Hubbard (Virtual) and Cllr Ashley O'Neill

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12 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Ian Thorn, Stuart Wheeler and Pip Ridout.

13 **Notes of the Previous Meeting**

It was,

**Resolved:**

**To approve and sign the notes of the meeting on 12 April 2022 as a true and correct record.**

14 **Part 3B: Channel Panel**

Kelly Fry, Public Health Principal, Vulnerable Communities, was in attendance to further present the draft report on inclusion of reference of the Channel Panel, part of the Prevent programme, within the constitution. This was a requirement of Home Office guidance.

Details were provided of the council's obligations in respect of providing annual Channel assurance statements, signed off by the Chief Executive, on the management of cases regarding the risk of radicalisation. The structure of Channel as a multi agency element within Prevent were provided, including that the relevant Cabinet Member attended Prevent Board meetings.

The Focus Group discussed the update and raised a number of queries on the relationship between Channel and Prevent, examples from other local authorities, engagement of elected members and voluntary community groups, and clarity over who would chair the Panel meetings.

Subject to minor amendments to improve clarity, including on reporting to the Cabinet Member, it was,

**Resolved:**

**To recommend Standards and Council adopt the proposed changes to Part 3B.**

15 **Part 12: Member Code of Conduct**

At its meeting in October 2021 the Focus Group had considered a draft LGA Model Code of Conduct. It had resolved not to recommend adoption at that time. The Standards Committee at its meeting in February 2022 established a working group to review the LGA Model Code to see if there were any aspects of it they would recommend Wiltshire Council adopt.

The working group reported to the April 2022 meeting of Standards Committee, recommending adoption of a new Code, which was a mixture of the current Code and amended sections from the LGA Code. Standards Committee requested additional feedback on the proposed revised Code from Group Leaders and the Focus Group.

The Focus Group considered the report to Standards on the proposed new Code. It was noted that when considering the LGA draft Code some members had been content with the existing Code, and others had considered that without legislative changes to provide ability for further sanctions and other changes, there would not be much benefit to adjusting the Code.

The Focus Group discussed the proposed Code, and stated that they continued to have concerns about the effectiveness of changing the Code when national rules such as on sanctions had not been changed, with the government indicating they did not intend to change this. They considered it was unclear if adopting the revised Code would have led to different outcomes from existing and historical cases, and therefore whether it would effect a change in behaviours.

There were some concerns about aspects of the Code and its guidance, such as promising to adhere to recommendations of a Hearing Sub-Committee, if these extended to, for example, a suggestion a member should resign, which was not an enforceable sanction. There was also some concern about the potential impact on towns and parishes, many of whom currently adopted the Wiltshire Code, and whether they should be expected to adopt the revised Code.

It was

**Resolved:**

**For the comments from the Focus Group to be reported to the Standards Committee.**

16 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 11.35 am - 12.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail [kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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