

Wiltshire Council

Standards Committee

7 June 2017

Appointment of Constitution Focus Group

Purpose

1. To seek approval for the appointment of a Constitution Focus Group to assist the Standards Committee in its role of overseeing the Council's Constitution.

Background

2. Since its creation as a unitary authority in 2009 the Council has appointed a Constitution Focus Group to advise and assist the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee in their respective roles of overseeing the Council's Constitution.
3. This has proved to be a very useful forum for reviewing the effectiveness of the Constitution and advising the Standards Committee before the Committee makes any final recommendations on changes to the Constitution for adoption by full Council. It is proposed that this arrangement continues.

Main Considerations

4. Membership of the Constitution Focus Group has to date included:
 - a member from each political group on the Council nominated by Group Leaders;
 - A member of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee;
 - A member of the Audit Committee;
 - Two co-opted non-voting members of the Standards Committee (one of which should be a town/parish council representative);
 - The Chairman of the Standards Committee;

Other Councillors and Officers are invited to attend as and when requested to assist in its work.

5. The Focus Group meets several times a year according to the level of business in its work programme. Referrals are generally made via the Standards Committee from full Council, its Committees or the Monitoring Officer, who is responsible for ensuring that the Constitution remains fit for purpose and up to date.

6. The business of the Constitution Focus Group has included significant revision of various parts of the Constitution, including the provisions on public participation at meetings, councillor questions, the council's petition scheme, updates to the schemes of delegation, financial and contract procedure rules and the protocol on councillor-officer relations.
7. Proposed revisions to the terms of reference of the Constitution Focus Group are set out in Appendix 1.

Environmental and Climate Implications

8. None arising from this report.

Public Health Implications

9. None arising from this report.

Safeguarding Implications

10. None arising from this report.

Procurement Implications

11. None arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

12. The arrangements are consistent with the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Implications

13. None arising from this report.

Financial Implications

14. None arising from this report.

Legal Implications

15. The Constitution Focus Group will assist the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee in ensuring that the Council's Constitution remains fit for purpose and up to date with legislation.

Recommendation

16. The Standards Committee is, therefore, asked to appoint the membership of a Focus Group on the Constitution for the forthcoming year on the basis set out in paragraph 4 above and to approve revised terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1.

Ian Gibbons,

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Appendix 1 – Proposed revised terms of reference for the Constitution Focus Group