

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**Subject:** Changes to the Governance Arrangements of the Council  
**Committee:** Council  
**Date:** 30 January 2017  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor John Riley, Cabinet Member for Democracy and Governance  
**CMT Member:** Giles Perritt, Assistant Chief Executive  
**Author:** Ross Jago, Senior Panel and Partnership Advisor  
**Contact details:** 01752 304469  
**Ref:**  
**Key Decision:** N/A  
**Part:** I

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### Purpose of the report:

In June 2016 the constitutional review group was tasked to explore whether the Council should retain its current “strong leader” model of governance cabinet model or consider adopting the Committee system model of governance. These options were provided by legislation contained within the Localism Act 2011.

Following the local elections held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016, no Party or Group achieved an overall majority on Plymouth City Council. A working arrangement between the Conservative Group and the UKIP Group was agreed to enable Members to carry forward the business of the Council.

An early motion to Council to introduce a “committee system” of governance gained council approval. The proposals for a new system were to be based on the following design principles, which would ensure a proposed governance system which was -

- **Open and Transparent** in its decision making;
- **Accountable** to the public, a principle which is central to our improvement and performance management approach;
- **Responsive**, providing timely decision making for the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- **Inclusive:** Establishing dispersed leadership and engaging all councillors appropriately;
- **Clear** about how the public, service users and other stakeholders can influence plans, policies and decisions before they are made;
- **Flexible** to the needs of the public, voluntary and private sector partnership working;
- **Best for Plymouth:** in the interests of the city and its people.

The Constitutional Review Group (CRG) were tasked with developing detailed proposals for the operation of the committee system, to be considered at the March 2017 full Council meeting, in advance of the May 2017 implementation date

This report summarises the work of the CRG and puts forward alternative proposals for consideration by Council. This report proposes that a number of these recommendations, specified below, are now approved.

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## **The Corporate Plan 2016 - 19:**

Proposals which result from the recommended action in this report will support *Caring Plymouth – Inclusive Communities* and *Confident Plymouth – Council decisions driven by citizen need*.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:**

Officer costs in undertaking recommended actions will be met through existing resources.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

As part of developing proposals the potential social and community benefits will be considered.

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### **Equality and Diversity:**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

At this stage no adverse impact has been identified to any protected groups in undertaking recommended actions but this will need to be assessed as proposals are developed.

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### **Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

That Council agrees -

1. to reaffirm the current model of governance (Cabinet strong leader model).
2. To direct the Constitutional Review Group to and bring back to Council in November a programme of work which:
  - Explores new forms of community engagement which develop new relationships with citizens and communities;
  - Extends beyond service provision to the overall welfare of an area, and;
  - Enables local ward members to take a lead role in ensuring that all resources available in the community are used for the good of its area.
  - Develops changes to the current system to increase the engagement of all councillors and allay the perception of increased disenfranchisement arising from current model of governance.
3. That forward planning arrangements be improved throughout the Council, to provide the Scrutiny function with the best and earliest opportunity possible to scrutinise the business to be considered by the Cabinet and Council and undertake effective pre-decision scrutiny.

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### **Alternative options considered and rejected:**

Maintenance of the status quo or change to a Committee System of Governance would not efficiently meet the above design principles outlined above.

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**Published work / information:**

[Local Government Information Unit: Changing to a committee system in a new era \(2014\)](#)

[Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny: Rethinking Governance – Practical Steps for councils considering changes to their governance arrangements \(2014\)](#)

[Centre for Public Scrutiny: Musical Chairs – Practical issues for local authorities in moving to a committee system](#)

[Local Government Act 2000](#)

[Localism Act 2011](#)

**Background papers:**

| Title   | Part I | Part II | Exemption Paragraph Number |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|--------|---------|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|   |        |         | 1                          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |  |
| Review of the Governance Arrangements for Plymouth City Council (Project Brief) | X      |         |                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |

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**Sign off:**

|   |                    |     |                  |            |                  |    |  |        |  |    |  |               |  |
|---|--------------------|-----|------------------|------------|------------------|----|--|--------|--|----|--|---------------|--|
| Fin   | djnI<br>617.<br>60 | Leg | DVS<br>2734<br>4 | Mon<br>Off | DVS<br>2734<br>4 | HR |  | Assets |  | IT |  | Strat<br>Proc |  |
| Originating SMT Member – Giles Perritt, Assistant Chief Executive |                    |     |                  |            |                  |    |  |        |  |    |  |               |  |
| Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes   |                    |     |                  |            |                  |    |  |        |  |    |  |               |  |