
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	20 June 2017
Report By:	Head of Legal & Property Services	Report No:	LP/051/17
Contact Officer:	Gerard Malone	Contact No:	01475 712710
Subject:	Inverclyde Council: Interim Governance Review		

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following the statutory meeting of the Council on 25 May 2017, this report makes proposals to update the Council's governance.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 At the Council's statutory meeting it was decided that:

- a report be submitted to the Council reviewing the membership of the Local Review Body;
- that a report be submitted to the Council or appropriate Committee on the establishing of a forum to discuss women's issues following consultation with the various political groups and specifically the three female Councillors;

2.2 Additionally, the outcome of the Best Value Assurance Report is being considered by the Council and it is timely and appropriate to consider arrangements from that relative to cross-party consultation on budget development through the Members' Budget Working Group.

2.3 This report also outlines possible arrangements for the Strategic Leadership Forum.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That the Committee consider the terms of this report and, if the arrangements are approved, that it be remitted to the Head of Legal & Property Services to report thereon to the June 2017 meeting of the Council.

Gerard Malone
Head of Legal & Property Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Following upon (a) the statutory meeting of the Council in May 2017 and (b) comments referred to in the Best Value Assurance Report, this is an opportunity to review the governance arrangements as follows:-

- the membership of the Local Review Body;
- the establishing of a Women's Forum;
- the future of the Members' Budget Working Group in relation to developing budget strategy and engaging cross-party members; and
- the continuation of the Strategic Leadership Forum.

4.2 This report proposes arrangements to implement the above and requests a remit to the Council for approval of these.

5.0 GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Local Review Body

5.1 The Council reviewed the membership of the Local Review Body at its meeting on 29 September 2016 as part of its overall governance review. Membership of the Local Review Body was extended from 5 Members to 11 Members at that time. In view of arrangements in the interim, Members have expressed a preference for 7 Members to be constituted for this quasi-judicial function. It is thought that arrangements will be more manageable whilst providing the high degree of review and scrutiny expected for this function. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Scheme of Administration be amended as from 1 August 2017 onwards to provide for a Local Review Body of 7 Members and the Council will be invited, if this remit is approved, to appoint those 7 Members in terms of normal provisions for the political balance and to appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair and to provide for a quorum of 4. The political balance for this 7 person body is as follows:

Political Party	7 Members on Body		Other Acceptable Allocation Option
	Numerical Entitlement	Allocation Based on Numbers	Allocation Based on Spread
LAB	2.55	3	3
SNP	2.23	2	2
INTERNAL IND COALITION	1.27	1	1
CON	0.64	1	1
LD	0.32	0	
	<u>7</u>		<u>7</u>

Women's Forum

- 5.2 In the interests of gender equality and in order that issues be properly discussed and reviewed, the Council has requested that a Women's Forum be established following upon consultation with the political groups and specifically involving the three, new female Members of the Council.
- 5.3 It is recommended that the Women's Forum be initially established as a working group of the Council as that will enable flexibility in the developing of this remit and a workplan and will also allow for the engagement of community planning partners or other external agencies most effectively. It is suggested the working group be comprised of 5 Elected Members (the three female Members being representatives of their respective groups) and the work will be supported by a lead officer, Wilma Bain, Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development. The political balance for this 5 person working group could be as follows:

Political Party	5 Members on Body		Other Acceptable Allocation Option
	Numerical Entitlement	Allocation Based on Numbers	Allocation Based on Spread
LAB	1.82	2	2
SNP	1.59	2	3
INTERNAL IND COALITION	0.91	1	
CON	0.45	0	
LD	0.23		
		<u>5</u>	

but as this is a working group of the Council the provisions relative to political balance do not strictly apply.

Members' Budget Working Group

- 5.4 It is recognised within the Best Value Assurance Report that for the past three years Councillors have operated a cross-party forum to discuss and agree budget priorities and actions. The Best Value Assurance Report notes that in November 2016 the SNP Group withdrew from this forum and it has been observed that previous Best Value audits have highlighted the benefits of cross-party forums and that Councillors should consider continuing with the Members' Budget Working Group post-election especially given the financial challenges that still exist.

- 5.5 The Members' Budget Working Group was formerly comprised of the members of the Strategic Leadership Forum and was supplemented by additional Members to reflect as far as practical the political representation of the Council to assist in openness, transparency and inclusiveness for purposes of developing the Council's budget.
- 5.6 The meetings of the MBWG enable open and frank discussion amongst the political groups and seek to achieve consensus insofar as possible in the developing of budget proposals. The group enables the political leadership of the Council to engage in an informal basis but it does not carry out responsibilities on behalf of the Council or its Committees and is entirely separate from the Council's formal Committee structure and Scheme of Administration. Its former Members believe that it has a track record in developing consensus to assist the Council's approach to its annual budgeting processes.
- 5.7 It is recommended that Members approve the continuation of the Members' Budget Working Group and to permit active participation from all political parties that its formal structure comprise of:

Labour Group (2 Members);
 SNP Group (2 Members);
 Internal Independent Coalition Group (1 Member);
 Conservative and Unionist Group (1 Member); and
 Liberal Democrat Group (1 Member).

If this remit is approved, a timetable of meetings will be circulated to all participating Members.

Strategic Leadership Forum

- 5.8 As referred to above, the Strategic Leadership Forum is a key opportunity for the political leadership of the Council to engage in an informal basis on a working group status. The SLF has, in the past, enabled open and frank dialogue amongst the political leadership and senior managers of the Council and it is strongly recommended this forum be continued. The membership of the SLF would comprise:

Labour Group (Leader and Depute Leader of the Council)
 SNP Group (Leader of the Minority Group(s));
 Internal Independent Coalition Group (1 Member);
 Conservative and Unionist Group (1 Member); and
 Liberal Democrat Group (1 Member).

- 5.9 If this remit is approved, the Strategic Leadership Forum will be convened from time to time as accords by the Chief Executive dependent upon business requirements.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 6.1 There are no financial implications.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Legal

- 6.2 The review of membership of the Local Review Body is entirely within the discretion of the Council. As yet, the Women's Forum is not within the Council's Scheme of Administration and there will be a review of remit and workplan within the course of the next year in order to determine any future formalisation of this group. The Members' Budget Working Group and the Strategic Leadership Forum are not comprised within the Council's formal Committee processes or its Scheme of Administration: both of these groups are informal working groups of the Council.

Human Resources

- 6.3 None.

Equalities

- 6.4 The establishing of a Women's Forum assists focus on gender equality.

Repopulation

- 6.5 There are no direct repopulation implications.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The CMT has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 There are no background papers.