

Policy Development and Review Committee - 26 November 2020

CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEES WORKING GROUP – UPDATE

1. The Working Group met twice on 5 and 18 November since it was tasked with reviewing the viability and details of Cabinet Advisory Committees at the PDRC meeting on 14 October.
2. PDRC resolved on 14 October that if the Council decided to introduce Cabinet Advisory Committees at Swale they would be politically balanced and the chairman would not be a Cabinet member or Deputy Cabinet member.
3. The Working Group has considered a case study report setting out the different arrangements for Cabinet Advisory Committees which exist in Gravesham Borough, Sevenoaks District and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils. The Working Group took the following observations from this:
 - Cabinet advisory committees should not act as a scrutiny mechanism;
 - the political make-up of the authorities in the case studies were very different to SBC;
 - there was general agreement that the Tonbridge and Malling model is closest fit to what SBC were trying to achieve;
 - our committees should be non-partisan, not trying to score political points;
 - Cabinet members should not be voting members of Cabinet advisory committees, but should attend the meetings;
 - Deputy Cabinet members should be voting members but not sit on a Committee that discusses their portfolio. However, as portfolios are combined this could exclude deputies from participating in some discussions;
 - Cabinet members to provide brief summary update reports for the committee to consider;
 - Cabinet advisory committees should be chaired by a non-executive member (as already agreed by PDRC); and
 - the SBC Forward Plan should be the main mechanism for setting the agendas at Cabinet advisory committees.
4. As a result of this, the Working Group are minded to respond to the issues Committee set them to consider in the following ways:
 - *Are three proposed advisory committees the best fit:*
 - *health and environment;*

- *finance and housing;*
- *community and economic development.*

Agreed.

- *Do the proposed split of Cabinet portfolios work across the three committees?*

Agreed, plus transport would fit with economic development and cross cutting corporate issues would fit in with finance.

- *What are the alternatives?*

None proposed.

- *Is the proposed membership set at the right level to provide cross-party input?*

15 members on each committee agreed, but not to include Cabinet Members.

5. The Working Group are still to consider:

- terms of reference;
- resources;
- what changes to current decision-making practices by Cabinet would need to change with establishment of advisory committees, including lessons learnt from PDRC's experience?

Next steps

6. The Working Group will continue to meet to consider the outstanding issues and agree a report with recommendations for consideration by PDRC at their next scheduled meeting on 27 January 2021.

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Working Group Coordinator