

9 JULY 2020

JOINT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

9 July 2020

- * Councillor Angela Goodwin (Chairman)
- * Councillor Angela Gunning (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Paul Abbey | * Councillor Bob McShee |
| * Councillor Jon Askew | * Councillor Masuk Miah |
| * Councillor Christopher Barrass | * Councillor Ramsey Nagaty |
| Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor George Potter |
| * Councillor Ruth Brothwell | * Councillor Jo Randall |
| * Councillor Graham Eyre | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| * Councillor Andrew Gomm | * Councillor Will Salmon |
| * Councillor Gordon Jackson | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Diana Jones | * Councillor Fiona White |
| * Councillor Steven Lee | * Councillor Catherine Young |
| * Councillor Ann McShee | |

* Present

Councillors Joss Bigmore, Chris Blow, Julia McShane, Susan Parker and Deborah Seabrook were also in attendance.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Joint Executive Advisory Board (EAB)

RESOLVED

that Councillor Angela Goodwin be elected as Chairman for this meeting.

Following her announcements, the Chairman drew the Joint EAB's attention to the Late Sheet which explained the differing roles of EABs and Overview and Scrutiny.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dennis Booth. Councillor Tony Rooth was present as a substitute for Councillor Dennis Booth.

3 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND NOTIFICATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint EAB held on 9 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

5 REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARDS (EABS)

The Lead Councillor for Service Delivery introduced a report inviting the Joint EAB to resume consideration of future options for the configuration of EABs as a second stage to the earlier review which took place during the latter part of 2018/19 and in response to previous feedback from the Local Government Association corporate peer challenge review of December 2017 and the Council's governance reviews of recent years.

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As a reminder and for the benefit of newer councillors, the report summarised the background to the earlier work which stemmed from an officer review of the effectiveness of EABs which took place in the latter part of 2018/19 leading to the formulation of recommendations in respect of reconfiguring the EABs and introducing measures to strengthen the Forward Plan process. In response to these recommendations, the Council established a councillor task and finish group to consider the recommendations and report its findings to the EABs and Council before any related decisions were made.

Having considered the group's subsequent findings, Council made some resolutions concerning work programming, the Forward Plan and the configuration of EABs. The most notable resolutions were that the existing arrangement of the two EABs be retained for the time being whilst the Forward Plan process was strengthened pending review following the Borough Council Elections in May 2019 to ascertain whether changes to the Forward Plan process and/or EAB structure were required. This subsequent review was to be carried out within 12 months of the Elections.

As this 12 month period had now elapsed, the Joint EAB was invited to carry out the second phase of the review of the structure and remit of the EABs. A related questionnaire had been prepared to gather councillors' views to inform this process and an analysis of the responses was appended to the report. Taking account of the findings of the councillor questionnaire, the report recommended that the Joint EAB make such recommendations to full Council in respect of the future structure and remit of EABs as it deemed appropriate. Although the recommendations would be considered initially by the Executive, councillors were advised that in the event that their recommendations required significant Constitutional changes, these would also require review by the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee as custodian of the Constitution, prior to referral to Council for approval.

The following points and views arose from related comments and discussion involving members of the Joint EAB:

- The EABs missed opportunities to have an initial input into policy development as they were not consulted at a sufficiently early stage to offer meaningful advice to the Executive.
- There needed to be better communication and dialogue between EABs and the Executive / lead councillors.
- There was a lack of confirmation of final agreement of the EABs' views and advice to the Executive and an absence of feedback from the Executive following submission of those views and advice. Therefore the recommendations from each EAB meeting should be clearly iterated in the minutes and included in the relevant Executive papers, and, in turn, the Executive should respond to indicate whether recommendations were being adopted, and if not, the reasons why.
- The EABs should align with the Directorates and Executive portfolios of the Council as these were less likely to change than the Corporate Plan and also because this gave a greater opportunity for the Boards to act in an advisory role to the relevant portfolios.
- The existing arrangement of two EABs should continue as one larger EAB would be unwieldy. The two EABs should meet more frequently, each with alternating meetings on a monthly basis to achieve a balanced and flexible workload. This would result in one EAB meeting occurring every month throughout the year with the same frequency as the Executive meetings. The EAB Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen could have follow up meetings to discuss how matters would be progressed if they felt it was necessary.
- Six or 12 monthly EAB overview meetings from the commencement of the municipal year to discuss the future work programme and direction for consultation with the Executive may be of some benefit.

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- Having taken account of the Executive Forward Plan and Corporate Plan, the EABs should have freedom to set their own agendas.
- It was felt that there were too many EAB substitute members and that one substitute per member was sufficient.
- EABs offered an opportunity for back-bencher involvement in the Executive decision-making process.
- EAB task groups were welcomed as a means for members to work alongside officers in order to undertake more detailed in-depth policy work and gain learning opportunities to develop greater knowledge of service areas.
- Greater powers for EABs were welcomed.
- Alternative approaches to the receipt of presentations and lengthy reports were a possibility and early provision of information was sought whenever possible.
- Although absent members may wish to submit views to an EAB meeting electronically, in the interests of transparency, these should be repeated at the public meeting for discussion and agreement.
- It could be concluded that EABs were an Executive resource which should be utilised to provide advice, assistance and support to the Executive through means including EAB task groups established to undertake research into a topic, a service that affected local residents or to develop policy. The Executive should proactively encourage EAB members to take on more responsibility and have more involvement in relation to Executive decisions.

Following the discussion, the Joint EAB

RECOMMENDED to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee and the Council that:

- (1) The concept of retaining two EABs, each meeting on alternate months with the flexibility to have a balanced inter-changeable remit as appropriate to the agenda items, without the risk of losing topic continuity and expertise, and possibly ahead of Executive meetings to offer a pre-decision opportunity to make recommendations, be agreed.
- (2) The remit of EABs be realigned to reflect the Executive portfolios and Directorates of the Council and renamed accordingly.
- (3) The existing Joint EAB arrangement be continued and implemented when significant and wide-ranging agenda items, such as budgetary matters, are under consideration.
- (4) Closer two-way working between the Executive and EABs, including an expectation that relevant Lead Councillors (or other Executive members in the absence of the relevant Lead Councillor) proactively attend EAB meetings and EAB Chairmen and / or Vice-Chairmen attend Executive meetings to elaborate on advice given and to receive feedback, be established and adopted.
- (5) A clear formalised procedure of reporting EAB advice and views to the Executive and EABs receiving Executive feedback be adopted.
- (6) In addition to exploring relevant Forward Plan items and Corporate Plan priorities, the EABs have free range to select their own review topics on which to advise the Executive, including the establishment of task groups where considered necessary (and subject to available resources).
- (7) The EABs receive items sufficiently in advance of determination by the Executive in order to have the opportunity to advise on, and influence, its decisions from a broader knowledge base.

Reason:

To introduce a more efficient and effective EAB configuration and contribution.

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The meeting finished at 8:35 pm

Signed
Chairman

Date