

Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director of Strategic Services

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Review of Executive Working Groups and taking forward the LGA Planning Committee Peer Review recommendations

Executive Summary

This report is normally published annually to ask the Executive to review the work carried out over the previous twelve months by the various working groups (including boards and panels) that have been established by either the Executive or the Leader/Lead Councillor, together with the work they are likely to undertake over the following twelve months. As part of this review, the report also asks the Executive to determine whether these groups should continue as presently constituted and, if so, to make or confirm appointments to them. The requirement to submit this report to the Executive is in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 24 (j).

This report is usually delivered in May but has been delayed this year due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The last reporting of the Review of Executive Working Groups was to the Executive on 19 May 2019.

The report, which was also considered by the Service Delivery EAB on 10 December 2020, also includes proposals to establish two new working groups:

- to consider in detail the recommendations of the recent LGA Planning Committee Peer Review; and
- to work up proposals for the future warding of Guildford borough, including the names, number and boundaries of wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each of them for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of their periodic electoral review.

Recommendation to the Executive

- (1) To review the current Executive working groups listed in **Appendix 1** to this report to determine in respect of each group, with particular reference to paragraph 3 of this report, whether they should continue with their work, or be disbanded.

- (2) To determine in respect of each working group which the Executive agrees should continue with their work:
- (a) any change to the group's terms of reference,
 - (b) the number of councillors on the working group,
 - (c) whether the working group should be cross-party (i.e. include councillors from more than two political groups),
 - (d) the time for which the working group is expected to continue operating
 - (e) the appointment of individual councillors to the working group, (the Executive may choose to make such appointments itself or ask political group leaders to nominate councillors for membership of the working group in accordance with the number of seats each political group has been allocated).
- (3) To consider the recommendations of the Service Delivery EAB in respect of working groups as set out in paragraph 4.3 of this report.
- (4) To establish a new Planning Committee Review Working Group as described in paragraph 3.7 of this report.
- (5) To establish a new Electoral Review Working Group with terms of reference as set out in Appendix 8.

Reason for Recommendation:

- To comply with the requirement on the part of the Executive to periodically review the continuation of the various Working Groups in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 24 (j).
- To consider the recommendations of the recent LGA Planning Committee Peer Review

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report asks the Executive to review the work carried out by Executive working groups over the past twelve months and the work they are likely to undertake over the next twelve months. As part of this review, the report also asks the Executive to determine whether these groups should continue as presently constituted and, if so, to make appointments to them.
- 1.2 It should be noted that other councillor task groups exist, such as the Councillor Development Steering Group and the Corporate Governance Task Group, which report to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee. However, this report is concerned only with the working groups appointed by the Executive, the Leader or lead councillors.
- 1.3 The report also includes proposals to establish two new working groups to:
- to consider in detail the recommendations of the recent LGA Planning Committee Peer Review; and

- to work up proposals for the future warding of Guildford borough, including the names, number and boundaries of wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each of them for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of their periodic electoral review.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The councillor working groups' work should assist in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and the fundamental themes that support it.

3. Background

- 3.1 This report sets out in **Appendices 1 - 7**:

- (a) a summary of general progress of each Executive working group including work undertaken, goals achieved and work still to be carried out (**Appendix 1**); and
- (b) the terms of reference and current composition of each working group

- 3.2 The Council agreed in December 2016, as part of a review of the Constitution, to include for the purposes of clarity and avoidance of doubt, information in Council Procedure Rules on the appointment, terms of reference, composition and duration of:

- working groups (appointed by the Leader, a lead councillor, or the Executive) and
- task groups (appointed by Council, a committee, or an EAB),

including the appointment of working/task group chairmen and substitutes.

- 3.3 Council Procedure Rule 24 provides that the "appointing body" (which could be the Leader, a lead councillor, or the Executive) shall determine, amongst other things, the number of councillors on a working group and may appoint individual councillors to it. Where it is necessary to alter the membership of such a working group, in May 2017 the Executive authorised the Lead Councillor with portfolio responsibility for governance to determine any change of membership of those working groups as and when required.

Proposed new working groups

- 3.4 Councillors will be aware that the Council had originally scheduled a Planning Committee Peer Review to be undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) with the Planning Advisory Service in March, but this was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Peer Review was rescheduled and took place in early November. The LGA have published their final report which includes 12 recommendations for the Council to consider. The LGA's report has been circulated to all councillors.
- 3.5 The final recommendation is that the Council should examine the possibility of setting up a Task and Finish joint officer/member group led by an independent, senior, well respected person to take Peer Review recommendations and other

improvement needs forward, and to take advantage of viewing the operation of other Planning Committees to aid learning.

- 3.6 At a meeting of political group leaders on 2 December 2020, it was suggested that the setting up of an Executive working group to examine these matters would be the best way of progressing this as expeditiously as possible.
- 3.7 It is therefore proposed that the Executive agrees to establish a new Planning Committee Review Working Group as follows:

Terms of Reference:

To consider the LGA Planning Committee Peer Review recommendations and other improvement needs, and make recommendations as appropriate to the Executive, Planning Committee, and full Council.

Membership:

The working group shall comprise of eight councillors as follows:

Two representatives from each of the R4GV and Liberal Democrat Groups and one representative from each of the other political groups (to be nominated by respective Group Leaders), together with appropriate officer involvement and support. Substitutes shall be permitted.

Chairman:

The working group to be chaired by a suitably qualified and experienced independent person.

- 3.8 It is also proposed to establish an Electoral Review Working Group to work up proposals for the future warding of Guildford borough, including the names, number and boundaries of wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each of them for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of their periodic electoral review. The draft terms of reference for this working group is attached as **Appendix 8**.

Proposed disbandment of working groups

- 3.9 Earlier drafts of this report had suggested that the Museum Working Group, which has not met for over a year due to a lack of external funding available to support the original objectives of the Museum development project and the impact of Covid-19 on the service, could be disbanded until a clear way forward for the scheme is determined. However, following consideration of this matter at the Service Delivery EAB on 10 December 2020, the Executive is being asked to consider retaining this working group (see paragraph 4.3 below).

Other updates

- 3.10 Since the last report to the Executive in May 2019 the Grants Review Panel has been disbanded and the delivery of community and voluntary grants is overseen by the Aspire Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 3.11 At its meeting on 25 August 2020, the Executive agreed to split the Climate Change and Innovation Board (CCIB) into two separate working groups. This report includes, at Appendix 1, an update on the work of the CCIB up to August.
- 3.12 The Electric Theatre Monitoring Group should be chaired by the Lead Councillor for Environment and has a vacancy previously filled by the late Councillor Sheard. The membership of this Group should be reviewed.
- 3.13 The Guildford Community Covenant Panel would usually have six members but only four have been appointed.

4. Consultations

- 4.1 The Service Delivery Executive Advisory Board (EAB) considered this report at its meeting held on 10 December 2020.
- 4.2 In his introduction to the report at the EAB meeting, the Leader of the Council drew attention to an initial proposal to disband the Museum Working Group and expressed a view that, although delivery of the Museum Project was currently unlikely owing to challenging financial circumstances, there remained a need for a Museum Working Group to guide the future direction of the Museum service. The Leader also highlighted proposals to establish the two new working groups referred to above.
- 4.3 Having discussed the report in the light of the above, the EAB agreed the following comments and recommendations to the Executive:
- (1) The Museum Working Group (MWG) should be retained to guide the future direction of the Museum service and consideration be given to its future membership, including co-optee(s), to utilise the existing knowledge base and experience of members. The MWG should cease reporting to the Major Projects Portfolio Board as it no longer constitutes a major project. The Council's art collection be considered initially by the MWG to inform decisions around its future management and display.
 - (2) The membership of the Weyside Urban Village Development Portfolio Programme Board be reviewed and expanded to include cross-party representation and non-Executive members.
 - (3) The Major Projects Portfolio Board should resume regular meetings with the existing membership to consider related current issues.
 - (4) Relevant information be fed from the Surrey County Council Health and Wellbeing Board to the Aspire Health and Wellbeing Board to facilitate information sharing and joined up working.
 - (5) Once the Arts Development Strategy and Public Art Strategy Board, the Electric Theatre Monitoring Group and the Town Twinning Working Group resume operation following the completion of Phase B of Future Guildford and an improvement in the Coronavirus pandemic situation, the opportunity be taken to review their membership with a view to accommodating the involvement of non-Executive members.

- (6) The membership of the Sports Development Strategy Group be reviewed, and increased if considered necessary.
- (7) Owing to the success of work stemming from the Play Development Strategy and Fixed Play Equipment Group, it should continue to operate.
- (8) An Electoral Review Working Group be established and all councillors be invited to submit expressions of interest to join it with a view to securing a membership mix to reflect differing experience levels and to balance political group and urban and rural ward representation. The Working Group should elect its chairman when its composition is finalised.
- (9) A Planning Committee Review Working Group be constituted along the lines set out in the report to consider and take forward the recommendations of the recent LGA Planning Committee Peer Review.

5. Key Risks

- 5.1 There are no key risks arising from directly from this report. Evaluation of any risk will be specific to the work undertaken by each individual working group.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any proposals, projects or suggestions from the groups with financial implications will either be contained within approved budgets or considered as part of the Service and Financial Planning cycle.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There is no legal requirement to establish working groups, but most councils use them for purposes similar to ours. We have made provision for their operation in our Council Procedure Rules.
- 7.2 As working groups have no powers, there is no requirement for them to be politically balanced.

8. Human Resource Implications

- 8.1 Currently, we are able to service working groups from within existing staffing resources.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Each Working Group, panel or board will be responsible for having due regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) when making any policy recommendations.

10. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 10.1 Each working group, panel or board will be responsible for having due regard to the Council having declared a climate emergency and acting in accordance with the commitments made by this Council to Climate Change and sustainability.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 In the light of the information provided in the appendices to this report (with the exception of Appendix 2), the Executive (as the appointing body) may ask working groups to continue their work or disband them. The Executive may also establish new working groups or revise terms of reference and composition of existing working groups or set a time by which it expects a working group to complete its work.

12. Background Papers

[Final Report of the LGA Planning Committee Peer Review \(November 2020\)](#)

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Table showing details of general progress and work to be undertaken by each of the current councillor working groups
Appendix 2: Terms of reference for the Climate Change Board
Appendix 3: Terms of reference for the Climate Change and Innovation Group
Appendix 4: Terms of reference for the Innovation Board
Appendix 5: Terms of reference for the Major Projects Portfolio Board
Appendix 6: Terms of reference for the Property Review Group
Appendix 7: Terms of reference for the SARP Governance Board
Appendix 8: Proposed terms of reference of the Electoral Review Working Group