

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Executive

Date: 08 August 2024

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report of Director: Susan Sale, Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services

Author: Carrie Anderson, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 01483 444078

Email: carrie.anderson@guildford.gov.uk

Lead Councillor responsible: Merel Rehorst-Smith

Tel: 01483 610581

Email: merel.rehorst-smith@guildford.gov.uk

Report Status: Open

Review of Executive Working Groups 2024-25

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Executive, Leader of the Council or a lead councillor may establish working groups for specific purposes. It is also good practice to review, at least on an annual basis, the work being undertaken by such groups and to determine whether they should continue.
- 1.2 This report asks the Executive to review the current list of working groups and their terms of reference, and to determine whether these groups should continue for the coming year or be dissolved. Where there is a preference for certain working groups to continue, the Executive is invited to confirm in respect of each group, the chairman, the terms of reference, and to appoint councillors to them for the next 12 months.
- 1.3 This year the review of working groups continues to sit in the context of transformation and collaboration with Waverley Borough Council, along with continued financial prudence. Efficiencies and resources remain key considerations whilst setting up the most efficient ways to support the

Executive in its decision-making to deliver the Council’s strategic priorities.

1.4 At full Council meeting on 25 July 2023, in the context of reporting on the Budget, the Executive established a cross-party Financial Review Executive Working Group (FREWG) to receive and comment on the Medium-Term Financial Plan updates and to consider options to close the projected financial gap within the Financial Recovery Plan; and to guide wider communications. In 2024, the Council received a set of recommendations from SOLACE¹ in regard to housing, finance and governance. Consequently, the Council has set out an Improvement Plan into which the financial recovery work has been subsumed. In the light of this, the FREWG at its last meeting on 10 July felt that its purposes had been served and was no longer required. It is therefore recommended that FREWG be dissolved.

1.5 The Leader of the Council has agreed to establish a new Executive working group – called the “Housing Operations Board”, for the purposes of:

1. promoting tenant and leaseholder engagement in decisions relating to the Council’s housing services,
2. including stakeholders in strategy, policy and performance reviews,
3. providing support and challenge to service improvement initiatives, and
4. providing assurance of the Council’s work to meet the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.

Previously, Executive agreed to set up the HRA Housing Management Board. For various reasons this group did not meet. Consequently, it is proposed the HRA Housing Management Board be deleted.

The terms of reference of the Housing Operations Board are at Appendix 8.

¹ SOLACE - The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

2. Recommendation to Executive

2.1. To consider the retention of the following working groups:

- Strategic Programmes and Projects Board
 - Capital, Transport & Infrastructure (CTI) Delivery Board
 - Housing Development Programme Delivery Board
 - Shaping Guildford's Future Programme Delivery Board
 - Weyside Urban Village Development Delivery Board
- Climate Change Board
- Guildford Community Covenant Panel
- Local Plan Panel
- Planning Development Improvement Board
- Property Review Group

2.2. To determine in respect of each of the working groups referred to in paragraph 2.1 above:

- (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).

2.3 To agree to dissolve the FREWG and the HRA Housing Management HRA Board.

2.4 To consider the establishment of the Housing Operations Board and approve its terms of reference and confirm appointments to it.

3. Reasons for Recommendation:

- 3.1. To assist the Executive to select or set up appropriate, properly resourced groups to provide support or undertake work on its behalf.

4. Exemption from publication

None.

5. Purpose of Report

- 5.1. This report asks the Executive to review the existing working groups and to determine if these groups should continue as presently constituted and, if so, to make appointments to them.
- 5.2. It should be noted that other councillor task groups exist, which report to other committees. However, this report is concerned only with the working groups appointed by the Executive, the Leader, or lead councillors.

6. Strategic Priorities

The councillor working groups' work should assist in the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2024-2034.

7. Background

- 7.1. This report sets out in **Appendix 1**:
 - (a) an overview each of the existing Executive working groups;
 - (b) the strategic theme that each working group supports;
 - (c) the terms of reference and current composition of each working group (where terms of reference are more expansive these are set out in in **Appendices 2-9**);
 - (d) an officer recommendation for continuation or dissolution.

8. Consultations

- 8.1. Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant officers across the council.

9. Key Risks

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

10. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly 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.

11. Legal Implications

There is no legal requirement to establish working groups, but most councils use them for purposes similar to ours. As working groups have no decision-making powers, there is no requirement for them to be politically balanced.

12. Human Resource Implications

Working groups are serviced from within existing staffing resources; however, it should be noted that our Joint Management Team operates across two councils.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

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.

14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

Each working group, panel or board must have due regard to the Council's adopted Action Plan and act in accordance with the commitments made by this Council to Climate Change and sustainability.

15. Summary of Options

- 15.1. The Executive may modify terms of reference and create or disband working groups as it sees fit.
- 15.2. The Executive should note that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees may also undertake work on its behalf.

16. Conclusion

In the light of the information provided in this report the Executive should consider whether existing working groups should continue their work or be dissolved. The Executive may also 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 or establish new working groups.

17. Background Papers

None.

18. Appendices

Appendix 1: Table showing current overview of Executive working groups.
Appendix 2: Delivery Boards Terms of Reference
Appendix 3: Strategic Programmes and Projects Board Terms of Reference
Appendix 4: Climate Change Board Terms of Reference
Appendix 5: Planning Development Improvement Board Terms of Reference
Appendix 6: Local Plan Panel Terms of Reference
Appendix 7: Property Review Group Terms of reference
Appendix 8: Housing Operations Board Terms of Reference