

Committee: Constitution Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 2 December 2014

4

Title: Council Structure 2015/16

Author: Maggie Cox Democratic Services Officer

Item for decision

Summary

1. The working group agreed at the last meeting to review the Council's current committee structure and to consider a proposal for a new structure for 2015/16 based on the reduction in the number of members from 44 to 39.

Recommendations

2. To consider the options set out in the report and make a recommendation to the Full Council meeting on 18 December 2014

Financial Implications

3. None at this stage. There will be implications for members' allowances from May 2015:

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	n/a
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	n/a
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	To comply with the legal framework in relation to decision making Changes to the council's constitution will be required
Sustainability	n/a
Ward-specific impacts	n/a
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

6. At the previous meeting on 2 October 2014, the working group agreed that it would review the Council's current structure of committees and working groups and consider a new structure based on 39 seats following the district election in May 2015, to include the following:-
- Suggested committees and working groups.
 - The number of members on each committee.
 - A timetable for the frequency of meetings.

7. It is noted that the council structure for 2015/16 will be determined at the first meeting of the new council in May 2015 and any proposal put forward at this stage will not be binding on the new council. However, it is useful now to consider the committees which will still be required and how the reduction of members from 44 to 39 can be accommodated within the structure. It is also necessary for a draft timetable to be developed and meetings scheduled, so that at least in initial stages of the new council, the day to day business of the council can continue.

8. Council structure

Appendix 1 - sets out the existing council structure and the number of seats on each committee. Taking the main committees (Council, regulatory and overview and scrutiny) 44 members provide each councillor with 2.02 seats.

Appendix 2 – sets out the suggested changes to the new council structure

- To remove the Staff Appeals Committee. This committee has not met for over 6 years, as the council has changed the way that it deals with appeals from its employees. It does not seem sensible to appoint members to a group that is not likely to meet. However, in future, if member involvement is required, a committee could be established by the council.
- The main committees (Planning, Licensing and EH, Performance and Audit and Scrutiny) should each comprise 10 members. The existing membership of Planning and Licensing is a historical legacy and it would seem sensible to adopt a consistent approach.

These two suggested changes would still provide each member with 2.02 seats on the main committees.

9. Terms of reference

It is suggested that the terms of reference for the main committees should be left for the new council to consider. Appendix 3 sets out the terms of reference for the Council and Cabinet working groups. As the work undertaken by the council working groups is ongoing, these should remain in the structure. Some changes will probably need to be made to the Cabinet working groups but this should probably be left for the new Cabinet to determine.

10. Frequency of meeting

Appendix 4 sets out the frequency of the main committee meetings. The timetable of meetings has been based on these principles for the last four years. Many of the dates are determined by operational deadlines, particularly in relation to budget setting.

It is proposed that the timetable of meetings for 2015/16 is prepared on a similar basis to previous years. In the light of previous discussion on the role of the Scrutiny Committee, members may wish to consider the most appropriate way to timetable these meetings.

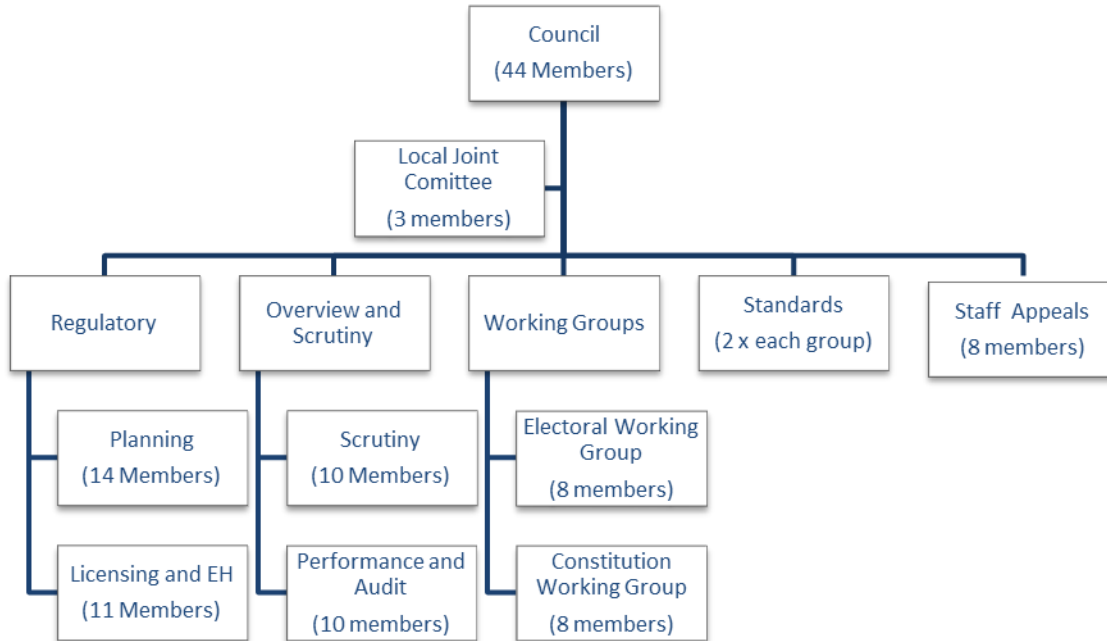
11. Matters to consider

- 1) The proposed structure of the Council based on 39 members set out in appendix 2.
- 2) Whether any changes are required to the terms of reference.
- 3) A basis for the preparation of a timetable of meetings for 2015/16.

Risk Analysis

12. None at present

Current Council Structure (44 members)



Committee seats available

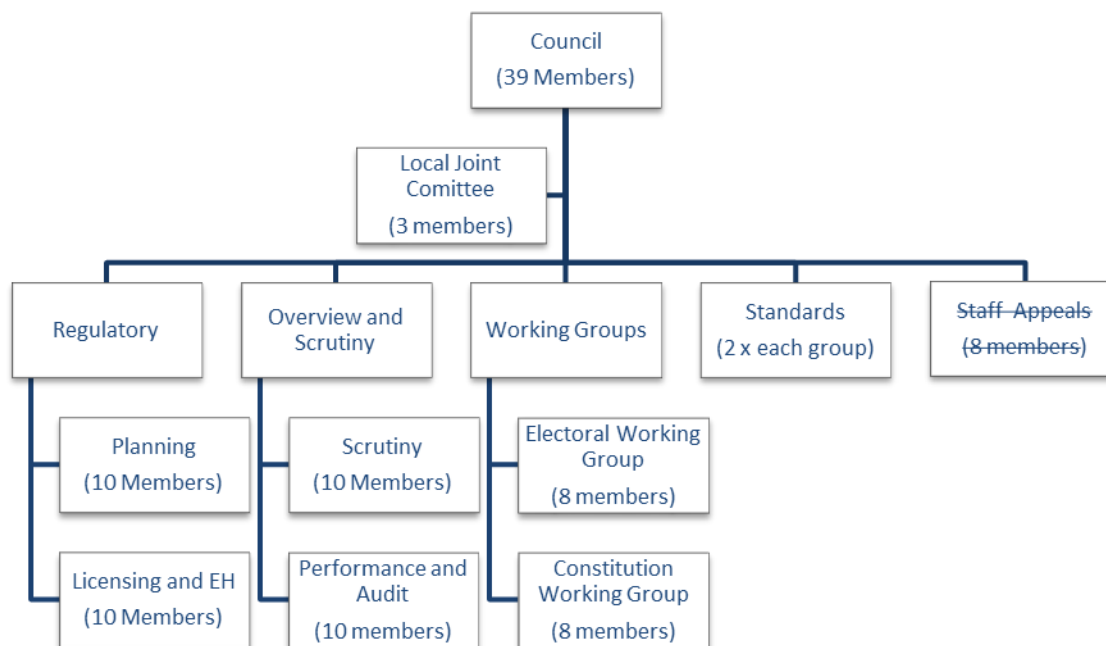
Council	44
Regulatory	25
Overview and Scrutiny	20
Staff appeals	8
Standards	8
Working groups	19
Total	124

No of Seats per member

2.8 - seats available per member

2.02 – seats on main committees Council, regulatory, overview and scrutiny.

Proposed Structure (39 members)



Seats available

Council	39
Regulatory	20
Overview and Scrutiny	20
Working groups	19
Standards	8
Total	106

No of seats per member

2.7 seats per member

2.02 – seats on main committees (council, regulatory, overview and scrutiny)

COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS 2014/15

Name of Group	Terms of reference	No of Members
Electoral working Group	To consider all electoral, polling and community governance reviews, and necessary arrangements for the administration of elections, and to make recommendations to the council.	8
Constitution Working Group	To keep the working of the Council's Constitution under review and make recommendations from time to time to the Council on potential improvements	8
Local Joint Committee	To help to promote good industrial relations through effective communication. To enable the employers to inform employees on matters which concern them. To enable staff representatives to raise employment issues on behalf of its members with the employers	5

CABINET WORKING GROUPS 2014/15

Name of Group	Terms of reference	No of Members
Community Achievement Panel	To oversee the organisation of the Community Achievement Awards scheme and make recommendations on the recipients of those awards.	5
Highways Panel	1) Prioritise and make recommendations for projects/schemes for the matters listed below to the ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation within the allocated budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Traffic management improvements •Tackling congestion Safer roads (including casualty reduction) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public rights of way improvement • Cycling programme • Passenger transport improvement programme • Minor improvement schemes 	4 + 4 County members

Name of Group	Terms of reference	No of Members
	<p>2) Have regard to the advice from ECC officers on relevant statutory/duty of care requirements.</p> <p>3) Oversee and set priorities for schemes funded through the localism process and the work of the Highways Ranger Service.</p> <p>4) Monitor the delivery of the agreed programme and raise issues and concerns through agreed procedures.</p> <p>5) Consider any other Highways and Transportation matter referred to the panel from time to time by other council constituted bodies, panels or groups</p> <p>6).Make recommendations to ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation to amend targets or discretionary policies and/or amend budget allocations between programmes if necessary to meet local priorities</p> <p>7) To advise the Cabinet on all of the above matters before recommendations are referred to the ECC Cabinet Member</p> <p>8).Take a lead role in liaison with town and parish councils</p> <p>9)To monitor spending/progress to delivery and make recommendations in relation to S106 highway contributions collected from planning applications</p> <p>0) To advise the Cabinet on any matters to be raised with the North Essex Parking Partnership regarding parking proposals, off and on street controlled car parking and any proposed Traffic Regulation Orders</p>	
Housing Board	<p>1. Inform on and monitor the performance and delivery of all Council housing related strategies and policies</p> <p>2. Monitor housing related performance indicators</p> <p>3. Inform on and monitor the Council's Housing</p> <p>4. Monitor the Council's Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>5. Monitor and inform on the delivery of affordable housing units in the District</p> <p>6.Consider the use of existing housing stock and other housing assets</p>	10 + 2 tenant reps
Local Plan Working_group	To give advice and guidance to officers in progressing the Local Plan and other planning guidance and report recommendations to Cabinet.	12

Name of Group	Terms of reference	No of Members
Stansted Airport Advisory Panel	1) Form an overview of policy and operational issues in relation to Stansted 2) Monitor the activities of the airport in the interests of the people of the district. 3) Monitor the implementation of Section 106 agreements and related undertakings by MAG and others 4) Review and anticipate future developments at the airport and in aviation policy.	10
Waste Strategy Panel	To monitor the implementation of the waste strategy and the inter authority agreement between collection and disposal authorities. To consider the need for review of policies and procedures, and enable members to contribute to resolution of recycling and street cleansing service delivery issues.	10

Appendix 4

Frequency of meetings

Meeting	No. per year	Frequency
Council	5 + Annual Council	May, July, October, December, February, April
Cabinet	10 (but at Leader's discretion)	Approximately every 6 weeks
Planning	14	Every 4 weeks (5 weeks over Christmas)
Licensing	4 times per year (including budget setting meeting)	July, October, January, March Panel meetings arranged on an ad hoc basis (around 10 per year)
Scrutiny	6	Generally 2 weeks before Cabinet Dates also reserved for potential call in 10 days following the Cabinet meetings
Performance and Audit	5	May, July, September, November, February Timetabled to comply with performance reporting and approval of the Statement of Accounts
Standards	3	June, October, March Hearings arranged on an Ad hoc basis (av. 1-2 per year)