

Committee: Council

Agenda Item

Date: 18 December 2014

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Title: Council Structure 2015/16

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Item for decision

Summary

1. The Council is asked to consider the Constitution Working Group's proposals for a new structure of the Council for 2015/16 based on the reduction in the number of members from 44 to 39 after the district elections in May 2015.

Recommendations

- 1 The proposed structure of the Council 2015/16 as set out in appendix 2 be agreed as the basis for planning and be put before the new Council in May 2015.
- 2 A timetable of meetings for 2015/16 be prepared on the basis of the frequency of meetings set out in appendix 3

Financial Implications

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

Background Papers

3. None.

Impact

- 4.

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

5. The council structure for 2015/16 will be determined at the first meeting of the new council in May 2015. 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.
6. At the meeting on 2 December 2014, the Constitution Working Group, reviewed the Council's current structure of committees and working groups and considered a new structure based on 39 seats. It considered the following areas:
 - Proposed committees and working groups.
 - The number of members on each committee.
 - A timetable for the frequency of meetings.

Council structure

The working group agreed that in the most part the status quo should be recommended to continue but some minor changes were suggested as follows

Removal of 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.

Reduction in committee membership

- Planning – 12 Members (currently 14)
- Licensing and Environmental Health – 10 Members (currently 11)

The size of membership for these committees is a historical legacy and it would seem sensible to adopt a consistent approach, in line with the other two main committees, which each have 10 members. However the working group felt that the Planning Committee should have 12 members, given the frequency of its meetings and the need to ensure that absence was adequately covered.

The existing structure and the proposed changes are set out in appendix 1 and 2.

The proposed amendments to the structure would accommodate the reduced number of members from May 2015, but still leave each member with the opportunity for a place on a council committee.

Terms of reference

The working group felt that the terms of reference for the main committees should be a matter for the new Council to consider. The terms of reference for the Council Working groups showed that the work in these areas was on-going and it was agreed that these groups should remain in the structure. It was the responsibility of new Cabinet to establish the Cabinet working groups.

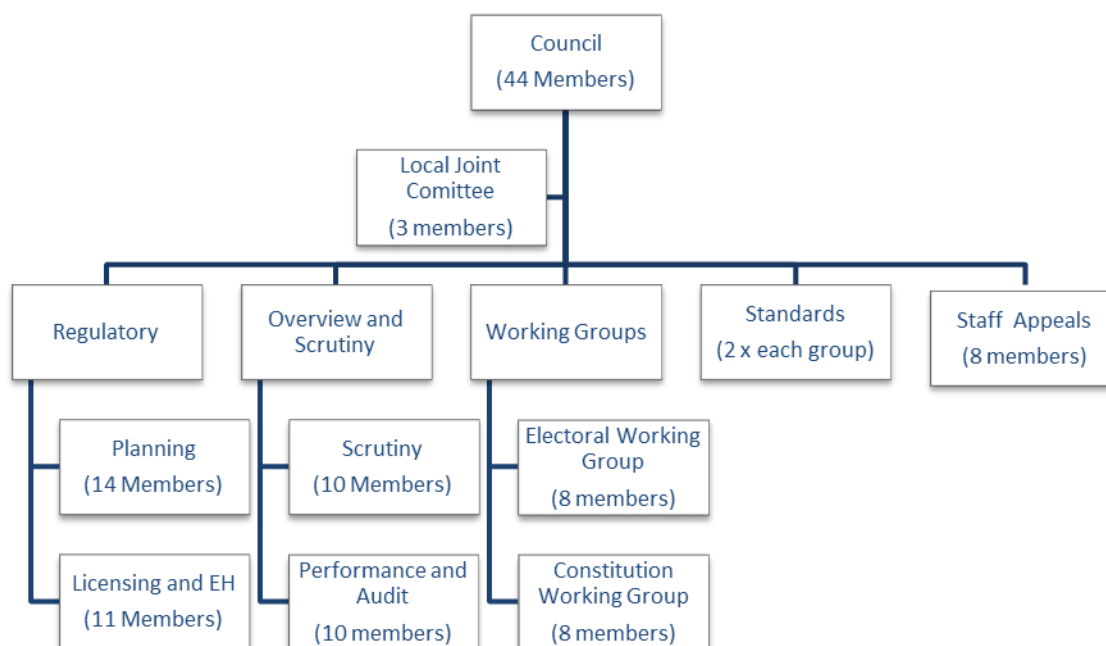
Frequency of meetings

Appendix 2 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. The working group agreed that the timetable of meetings for 2015/16 should be prepared on a similar basis to previous years. It was envisaged that the new council might wish consider the most appropriate way to timetable the Scrutiny Committee meetings given the previous discussion on this matter.

Risk Analysis

None at present

Current Council Structure (44 members)



Committee seats available

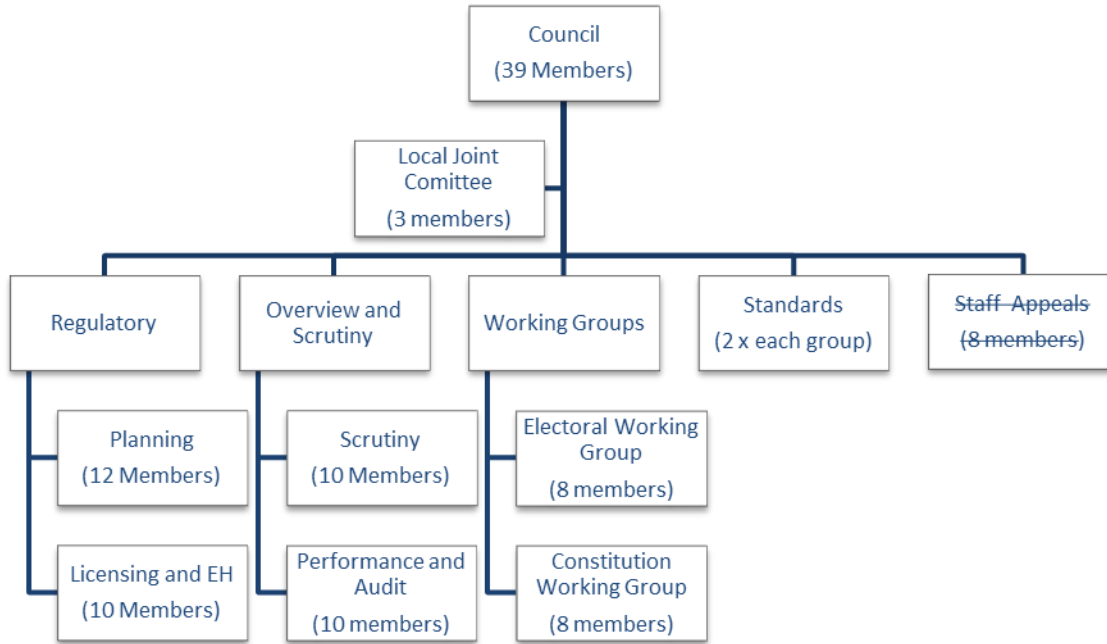
Council	44
Regulatory	25
Overview and Scrutiny	20
Staff appeals	8
Standards	8
Working groups	19
Total	124

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	22
Overview and Scrutiny	20
Working groups	19
Standards	8
Total	108

No of seats per member

2.8 seats per member

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

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)