

Committee: Governance Review Working Group **Date:** 7 September 2021
Title: Evaluation of Current Position and Possible Next Steps
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Summary

1. At the meeting held on 30 July 2019, full Council agreed to establish a Governance Review Working Group (GRWG) to review the current governance model for Uttlesford District Council and to make recommendations to Full Council.
2. The first GRWG meeting was held on 23 September 2019 and a further six meetings have been held since, together with several Task and Finish Group meetings, to consider the current governance model.
3. A report was taken to Full Council on 20 July 2021 that recommended that a trial system of Portfolio Holder briefings be introduced for a period of six months prior to possible consideration by Governance, Audit and Performance Committee (GAP). A draft protocol was also submitted for consideration. A detailed history of works undertaken by the GRWG has been included in the background papers of that report.
4. The Chair of GRWG reported at Full Council that there was no longer cross-party support for the recommendation in respect of Portfolio Holder briefings and that he therefore proposed to refer the report back to GRWG for further work. This was agreed and the attached report is brought back to GRWG for further consideration.
5. As a starting point, officers suggest that Members review progress made against the original Terms of Reference and to consider possible next steps.

Recommendation

6. That the GRWG:
 - i. Considers the report from Full Council that has been referred back.
 - ii. Reviews progress made against the Terms of Reference.
 - iii. Considers possible next steps.

Financial Implications

7. None in relation to this report.

Background Papers

8. None.

Impact

9.

Communication/Consultation	None, at this stage.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None, other than that any new arrangements will need to be legally compliant.
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	Any new arrangements will need to have clear delegation arrangements to ensure effective roles and responsibilities; it will need to be adopted with sufficient time to enable training for officers.

Terms of reference

10. At the inaugural meeting of the Governance Review Working Group in September 2019, the following Terms of Reference were agreed:

To find the best governance model, modified as necessary, for this Council by:

- Establishing what principles UDC consider relevant to its decision making
- Examining the current model, and how this might be modified to incorporate the identified principles
- Considering alternative models of governance, and how any of these, if adopted, may operate.

11. Progress is considered to have been made against the three bullet points detailed above as follows:

- Establishing what principles UDC consider relevant to its decision making – Members have consistently referred to inclusivity, transparency and good governance as principles they desired to be enshrined within the governance model at UDC. The Chair has previously indicated that the intention was to make

the governance system more democratic and to improve outcomes, and that goodwill would be required from all sides to move forward.

- Examining the current model, and how this might be modified to incorporate the identified principles – Members recently considered the principles identified above and concluded that portfolio holder briefings was one way forward. There had previously been consideration of the introduction of Shadow Committees.
- Considering alternative models of governance, and how any of these, if adopted, may operate -. Members have been provided with models of governance from various Councils, including West Lindsey District Council, Worcester City Council, Borough of Wellingborough, Malvern Hills District Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Basildon Borough Council, Chelmsford City Council and Guildford Borough Council. The majority of Members supported an amended Leader/ Cabinet governance system as opposed to a change to a committee system of governance.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That governance changes do not meet the objectives set by members and either do not improve how the Council works or make things worse.	3	3	Proper project planning and evidence gathering. Active involvement by members of the working group and engagement throughout the process by all councillors. Introduction of any proposed changes can be made on a trial basis.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.