

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

DATE: WEDNESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2013

REPORT BY: DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF INTERNAL MEMBER FORA

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To progress the review of internal member informal fora such as panels and working groups.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 At the Annual Council meeting on the 15 May the Head of Legal & Democratic Services' report on constitutional matters included a section on internal Member bodies. It explained that in the light of the recent implementation of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and at the start of a new Council it was an opportune time to review the various internal member bodies. The Council agreed to the recommendation that the review be undertaken by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with Group Leaders and a report submitted to the Constitution Committee and Council. It also agreed that pending the outcome of the review the existing internal bodies be retained.
- 2.02 The review covers those internal member fora that have been established for an indefinite period rather than those set up to deal with a specific task which automatically ends once that task has been completed. The review therefore does not include any task and finish working groups set up by Overview and Scrutiny.
- 2.03 Most of the internal member fora are undertaking or advising upon executive functions which are the responsibility of Flintshire's Cabinet. In relation to such member fora, any Council decision can only be a recommendation to the Cabinet, who have the final decision on whether such member fora should continue or not.
- 2.04 At its meeting on 24 July the Constitution Committee agreed that the further information listed below should be obtained for each internal body:
- a) the membership
 - b) the terms of reference or function

- c) the frequency of meetings
- d) the view of the relevant senior officer as to whether the body should continue or not and the reason for this view
- e) for those internal bodies that relate to executive functions, to obtain a view as to whether the body should continue from the appropriate Cabinet member
- f) the view of the chair of each forum

2.05 At the last meeting of the Constitution Committee on 24 October it considered a number of member fora for which the above information had been obtained and made recommendations to either Council or Cabinet as appropriate. Attached to this report as Appendix 1 is a list of the remaining member fora within the review together with the information that has been obtained in relation to them and a column indicating whether or not each forum is discharging an executive or a council function.

2.06 Group Leaders are being consulted on this report at the Group Leaders meeting on the 29 January 2013 and there will be verbal feedback on it at the Committee meeting.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 All internal member fora require resources from both members and officers in terms of preparation, attendance and actioning outcomes. The review may identify that whilst a member forum is discharging a valuable function there is a more efficient way of doing so that is less resource intensive.

3.02 Whilst some internal fora served a valuable role when they were initially established, with the passage of time the need of that role may have diminished. There may for instance have been a change in legislation or policy that reduced the need for a particular member forum. Whilst new member fora are created to meet new legislation or new policies, there needs to be a specific review of existing fora to ensure that they are still needed and are an efficient way of discharging their role.

3.03 The Joint Consultative Committee in the view of the Head of HR and OD should continue. It is required as part of the national agreement with the recognised unions and assists the Council in meeting its statutory requirements as an employer. Both the current Chair of the Committee and appropriate Cabinet Member agree that this should continue.

3.04 Flintshire currently has two separate fora entitled 'Teachers Consultative Committee' and 'the Flintshire County Council Teachers Consultative Committee'. It is the view of the Director of Lifelong Learning that these two fora can be combined and for the combined body to cover all education staff, not just teachers. The Chairs of the

bodies and the appropriate Cabinet Member agree with the view of the Director of Lifelong Learning.

- 3.05 The School Performance Monitoring Group has recently been reviewed and the Director of Lifelong Learning is of the view that it should remain. This view is shared by the Chair of the Group and the appropriate Cabinet Member.
- 3.06 The Planning Delegations Body meets every 2 weeks. The Head of Planning is of the view that despite recent improvements this is still not a transparent process and that the body should not continue. This view is supported by the appropriate Cabinet Member.
- 3.07 The Member/Officer Tenant Working Group meets up to 6 times a year to implement and review the Customer Involvement Strategy and action plan. The Head of Housing believes that it is important that the group continues as it is a partnership between tenants, staff and elected Members and shows true partnership in delivering a quality service and enables tenants to play an active role in monitoring the delivery of the housing service. This view is supported by the appropriate Cabinet Member and the current Chair of the body.
- 3.08 The Voluntary Sector Grants Panel provides recommendations to the Chief Executive on payments from the Council's community chest to third sector organisations. The appropriate senior officer together with the Chair of the body and the appropriate Cabinet Member are of the view that the Panel should continue. The Panel plays an important role in that it enables elected Members to maintain an understanding of the types of grass roots organisations seeking funding plus the trends and difficulties faced by local organisations.
- 3.09 The Inclusion Service Steering Group meets once a term to review and monitor service policy, provision, delivery and efficiency. The Director of Lifelong Learning is of the view that it should continue as it provides a valuable forum ensuring that Members and other stakeholders maintain their knowledge of inclusion services, challenge policy and have the opportunity to impact on service change. This view is shared by the appropriate Cabinet Member and the Chair of the body.
- 3.10 The Welsh in Education Strategic Forum meets approximately 6 times a year to agree, implement and review a coordinated approach that best delivers the requirements of the WG's Welsh-medium Education Strategy. The Director of Lifelong Learning believes it should continue as it is the key vehicle for the delivery and monitoring of the Welsh Education Strategic Plan. This view is shared by the appropriate Cabinet Member and the Chair of the body.
- 3.11 The Foster Care Panel is required under the Fostering Services

(Wales) Regulations 2003. Its function is to consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to act as a foster parent. It is the view of the relevant senior officer, the Chair of the body and the appropriate Cabinet Member that the Panel should continue.

- 3.12 The Children's Forum ensures that the Chief Executive and Cabinet Members are well informed about the progress and well-being of vulnerable children for whom the Authority holds significant responsibility. The view of the relevant senior officer is that it should be retained. This view is shared by the appropriate Cabinet Member and the Chair of the body.
- 3.13 The Adoption Panel meets monthly and ensures that vital elements for the planning of children and young people can occur, that resources are available for them and to provide an integrated service for Flintshire children. The appropriate senior officer together with the Chair of the body and the appropriate Cabinet Member agree that this should continue.
- 3.14 The Waste Strategy Review Board was set up to consider issues relating to waste management strategy and make recommendations to the Cabinet. The Council's Waste Strategy was approved by Executive in June 2010 and will be reviewed by Cabinet in 2013. The strategy document defines Council policy on all waste management issues and therefore the member fora is no longer required. The Director of Environment is of the view that there is no longer a need for this body and his view is supported by the appropriate Cabinet Member. There is presently no chair of this body.
- 3.15 The Health & Safety Board exists to facilitate and monitor the strategic development and progress of health and safety practice and to raise the profile of health and safety so it becomes embedded in the culture of the Authority. The relevant senior officer believes that it is an extremely valuable group that should continue and this view is supported by the Chair of the body and the appropriate Cabinet Member.
- 3.16 The Procurement Board was created to raise the profile of procurement at a strategic level. It has not met for some time. The view of the relevant senior officer is that procurement is now a full programme within Flintshire Futures, whose governance arrangements replaced the need for this Board. He therefore recommends that it be discontinued and this view is shared by the appropriate Cabinet Member. The Board has no chair at the present time.
- 3.17 The ICT Panel's functions include championing the development and implementation of ICT initiatives across the Council. Whilst the Panel has not met for some time and currently does not have chair, the

relevant senior officer and Cabinet Member believe there should be such a body but revisiting its terms of reference and membership. A recent good report from the Wales Audit Office recommended some form of member forum to consider ICT investment and priorities. The Head of ICT believes that the reconstituted Panel should have high level officer/elected Member representation with terms of reference to shape the direction of the service and help direct resource allocation and investment to support the organisation as a whole.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 For the committee to make a recommendation to Council regarding the future of the Planning Delegations Forum (numbered 5 in appendix 1).
- 4.02 For the committee to report to Council and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet for the remaining fora in appendix 1 which relate to Executive functions.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 A reduction in member fora will result in some savings that are difficult to quantify.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 A reduction in member fora may lead to some reallocation of duties.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 Group Leaders

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 Group Leaders

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – List of Internal Member Fora

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Report of the Head of Legal & Democratic Service son Constitutional Matters to the Council meeting 15 May 2012
- Minute of Council meeting 15 May 2012 relating to internal bodies
- Report to Group Leaders dated 9 July 2012
- Report to Constitution Committee 24 October 2012

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