

Thurrock Council

Governance Recovery Board

Minutes – 2pm, Monday 11 November 2024

Attendees:

Dave Smith (DS) – Managing Director Commissioner / Chief Executive (Chair)

Cllr John Kent (JK) - Leader of the Council

Cllr Lynn Worrall (LW)- Deputy Leader

Cllr Andrew Jefferies (AJ) – Opposition Leader

Luke Tyson (LT) – Chief Intervention Officer (Minutes)

Daniel Fenwick (DF) – Executive Director of Corporate Services

Guests:

Helen Nicol (HN) – Assistant Director Legal and Governance

Frankie Smith (FS) - Head of Financial Assurance, Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance

Kelly McMillan (KM) - Business Development Project Manager & Chief Risk Advisor

Apologies:

Cllr George Coxshall (GC) – Opposition Deputy Leader

Paul Turner (PT) – Director of Legal, Essex County Council

Crissy Hall (CH) – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners

Claire Demmel (CD) - Interim Executive Director of Place

Alex Powell (AP) – Assistant Chief Executive

Amber Robinson (AR) – Executive Assistant

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1. DS welcomed board members to the meeting.

2. Governance Review and Constitution Review Update

2.1. DF provided an update on the progress of the Governance and Constitution Reviews. Key points include:

- Significant progress has been made on the processes of decisions going to Cabinet and these will soon be rolling out to other committees.
- Better grip of forward planning.
- Rolling out training for officers for report writing for Cabinet reports.

2.2. A set of reports on the Constitution Review is due to go to General Services Committee in December. The Code of Conduct and complaints procedure went to Standards Committee earlier this month and received good feedback. Work continues on openness and transparency including the right to access information for Members and Public.

2.3. There will also be a review of the roles relating to Full Council and Cabinet which will pick up on the relationship and interaction between Cabinet, Full Council and Overview & Scrutiny. This will come forward in due course. The scheme of delegations is also in development.

2.4. Training and induction will have a tailored approach to newly elected Members, compared with returning Members.

2.5. Member conduct has generally improved but there are still some isolated issues. The vast proportion of Members are conducting themselves in an exemplary way, however there is still some disruption from a small number of members.

2.6. In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- The government has made an announcement about potential sanctions for Member behaviour - the draft IRP report gives a good representation on the challenges Thurrock is facing in this area.
 - The timeliness of reports
 - The approach to induction, including setting an early date and building a meaningful programme.
 - The timetable for the constitution review.
- **Action – HN to reissue the request for feedback on Member Induction to Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Whips**

3. Minutes/Actions of the Previous Meeting

3.1. The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

4. Corporate Risk Register

4.1. FS and KM provided an update on the work relating to risk management and the development of the Corporate Risk Register. There was a discussion following the update, where attendees thanked officers for the comprehensive update and reflected that the work was moving in the right direction.

4.2. Questions were raised around how officers are looking at reciprocal arrangements with other councils to review and sense-check our risk register to get an independent review.

4.3. Feedback from the Member training was positive, but board members reflected that a higher level of attendance would be desirable. It was discussed that these positive comments from those who attended should be used to encourage more Members to join future sessions.

- **Action: KM to recirculate risk questionnaire to Members.**

5. Annual Governance Statement Update

5.1. FS gave an update on the work relating to the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). Attendees discussed that these were an incredibly important tool for the Council, as an AGS is a mark of a council which has got its act together and clearly outlines how finance and governance are working together.

5.2. There was also a discussion around the Local Code of Governance, which is now in place, which the Council can use as another tool to measure themselves.

- **Action: FS to include Leader of the Opposition as a consultee of the AGS.**

6. AOB

6.1. The Leader raised the delay in appointing member mentors for Cabinet Members. DS and LT agreed to take the issue away and raise with the LGA.

- **Action: DS and LT to discuss member mentors with the LGA.**

6.2. There being no other business, the meeting closed.

APPENDIX I: Full Meeting Actions:

- **Action: HN to reissue request for feedback on Member Induction to Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Whips.**
- **Action: KM to recirculate risk questionnaire to Members.**
- **Action: FS to include Leader of the Opposition as a consultee of the AGS.**
- **Action: DS and LT to discuss member mentors with the LGA.**