

**Policy and Resources Scrutiny
Committee**

**In-Depth Scrutiny Project
2022/23**

**‘Developing Strong
Governance:
Strengthening Joint
Working Between
Councillors and Officers’**

Final Report and Recommendations (July 2023)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am pleased to be able to present this report and recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny project for 2022/23.
- 1.2 Councillors and officers are indispensable to one another and mutual respect between both is essential for good local government, as a strong, constructive and trusting relationship between councillors and officers is essential to the effective and efficient working of the Council. Councillors provide a democratic mandate to the Council, whereas officers contribute the professional expertise needed to deliver the policy framework agreed by members and together, they bring the critical skills, experience and knowledge required to manage a local authority effectively. This in-depth scrutiny project builds upon some of the issues that were considered as part of the joint in-depth scrutiny project undertaken for 2021/22 and I would like to thank all councillors, former councillors and officers for their contribution to the project.
- 1.3 Finally, I would like to thank officers of the Democratic Services Section for their assistance and support during the course of the in-depth scrutiny project and in the production of this final report.



Councillor Tricia Cowdrey
Chair of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project Team

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Each of the Council's scrutiny committees (the People Scrutiny Committee, the Place Scrutiny Committee and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee) has traditionally undertaken an in-depth scrutiny project each year. The in-depth projects are selected at the beginning of each municipal year and generally focus on the Council's corporate priorities or matters of local concern. Recent in-depth scrutiny projects have also been aligned with the ambition and outcomes arising from the Southend 2050 programme. The in-depth scrutiny projects lead to the development of reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council on its policies, budget provision and service delivery. Participation in the in-depth projects enable councillors to be actively involved in a specific topic and to influence and shape proposals around service improvement that will result in improved outcomes.

3. FRAMEWORK OF THE IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY PROJECT

- 3.1 At its meeting in July 2022, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee agreed that an in-depth scrutiny project be undertaken during the 2022/23 municipal year on the theme of 'Developing Strong Governance: Strengthening Joint Working Between Councillors and Officers', as part of the scrutiny work programme for the year.

- 3.2 There were a number of reasons for the identification of the in-depth scrutiny project. In particular, the project built upon the success of the project undertaken jointly by each of the scrutiny committees for 2021/22, on the theme of 'Enabling Councillors to be Effective'.
- 3.3 The agreed scope of the in-depth scrutiny project was:
- (a) To ensure that the separate review being undertaken of the Council's Constitution by the General Purposes Committee, to which all members of the Council have a separate opportunity to contribute, is used to deliver effective communication between councillors and officers.
 - (b) Where relevant, to feed into the review being undertaken of the Constitution by the General Purposes Committee.
 - (c) To review current arrangements for communication between councillors and officers and to identify what better communication would look like, using 'live' examples, setting a positive tone and learning from strengths.
 - (d) To review current training and development opportunities and induction arrangements for new/existing councillors to ensure engagement with training and induction arrangements and better understand how councillors would like information to be presented, to improve the understanding of business needs and new ways of working across the Council.
- 3.4 The review was set within the context of the Council's 2050 ambition and priorities and the Project Team was tasked with reviewing relevant issues and to report back to the Cabinet with appropriate findings and recommendations.
- 3.5 As a number of elements of the in-depth scrutiny project also covered issues that were considered as part of the joint scrutiny project undertaken for 2021/22, we received progress updates on the implementation of each of the recommendations arising from that joint scrutiny project, to assist the consideration of aspects of the current in-depth scrutiny project and the formulation of appropriate recommendations arising from the project.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The review was undertaken on behalf of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committees by a Project Team comprising the following members appointed by the Council on 19 May 2022:
- Councillors T Cowdrey, D Garston, A Line, R McMullan, D Nelson, M Sadza, C Walker
- Former Councillor: I Shead
- 4.2 Councillor T Cowdrey was appointed Chair of the Project Team at its initial project scoping meeting held on 28 September 2022.
- 4.3 The Project Team was supported by relevant officers including S Meah-Sims (Executive Director (Strategy, Change and Governance)) and S Tautz (Principal Democratic Services Officer/Project Co-ordinator). Other officer support was provided in respect of specific elements of the in-depth scrutiny project, including:
- R Erasmus (Learning and Development Manager)
K Eyre (Internal Communications Advisor)

- 4.4 The Project Team met on six occasions between September 2021 and March 2022. Efforts were made by the Project Team to ensure that the timescale for the delivery of the project was maintained and that the project was completed within the 2021/22 municipal year.
- 4.5 The in-depth scrutiny project was undertaken using an evidence-based approach to the consideration of existing governance and joint working arrangements, through a mixture of experiences presented by councillors and informative presentations that supported the understanding of the current provision of services. No witness sessions or site visits were held in respect of the project, although some examples of service provision in other local authorities were presented to the Project Team.
- 4.6 A project plan and work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project was adopted by the Project Team in November 2022, having been agreed by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in October 2022. The project plan and work programme set out the scope and framework for the project, alongside a programme of thematic evidence-gathering activities around the following specific areas identified as key to the desired outcomes for the project:
- (a) The context and expectations of the in-depth scrutiny project.
 - (b) Induction training arrangements and development opportunities for councillors, including the Councillor Induction and Training Programme.
 - (c) The ongoing review of the Council's Constitution.
 - (d) Communication between councillors and officers.
 - (e) How councillors would like information to be presented.
 - (f) The progress of relevant recommendations arising from the joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22.
- 4.7 The following sources of evidence were considered as part of the in-depth scrutiny project:
- (a) Case studies, experiences and feedback.
 - (b) Specific examples of issues within the scope of the project where things have not gone well.
 - (c) Relevant data etc. held by the Council or obtained from published sources or benchmarking arrangements.
 - (d) Information/feedback from relevant service teams.
 - (e) The presentation/demonstration of relevant systems and processes.
 - (f) The progress of relevant recommendations arising from the joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22 ('Enabling Councillors to be Effective').

5. CONTEXT AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY PROJECT

- 5.1 At the meeting of the Project Team in December 2022, we considered the context and expectations of the in-depth scrutiny project and agreed that the Project Team would focus on the identification of solutions to issues or concerns that were raised as part of the project, that members and officers would demonstrate mutual respect for each other in the delivery of the project and that officers would work in partnership with members of the Project Team to ensure the successful delivery of the in-depth scrutiny project. We also agreed that the Chair would seek the full support and active engagement of all members of the Project Team to ensure the successful delivery of the project.
- 5.2 The Project Team considers that the chairs of committees etc. should ensure that they always set clear expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, boundaries, standards of conduct and behaviours between councillors and officers, at the outset of meetings. We believe that Chairs should also seek the active participation of all members to achieve the successful delivery of outcomes and we are aware that arrangements have already been agreed for the Chairs of the Council's public-facing meetings to formally outline the

expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown during debates, at the commencement of meetings. We support the continuation of this approach going forward and recommend that these expectations be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that all members and officers feel included, respected and able to contribute effectively.

- 5.3 The Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a corporate peer challenge of the Council in October 2022, as part of the support that the LGA offered to local authorities to provide independent and external support and challenge. Following the completion of the peer challenge, the LGA provided the Council with a report based on their findings and some aspects of the in-depth scrutiny project for 2022/23 set out in this report reflect recommendations made by the LGA.

6. INDUCTION TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNCILLORS

- 6.1 At the meeting of the Project Team in March 2022, we considered the 'Induction Training and Development Opportunities and Arrangements for Councillors' theme of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project.

- 6.2 Councillors bring different and valuable skills to their role. However, new councillors do not always have extensive knowledge of the system of local government, how a council works or the full range of their roles and responsibilities. From their first council meeting, councillors will be required to make important decisions on behalf of their communities and take responsibility for those decisions. Those decisions often involve significant use of public money, assets or natural resources. It is important that councillors have, or quickly attain, a clear understanding of the system of local government, how the Council works and the full range of their roles and responsibilities. It is equally important that all councillors have ongoing opportunities to undertake appropriate skills development and training in areas needed to assist them to carry out their role effectively.

- 6.3 A comprehensive induction programme helps new councillors to settle in with the Council, to understand their role and expectations, to develop strong relationships with officers, and to build competence and confidence in serving their residents and the community. The Councillor Induction and Training Programme outlines the training and development that councillors can expect to receive as part of their induction arrangements or as continuous professional development.

- 6.4 The Project Team received a presentation from the Learning and Development Manager on the development, content and delivery of the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24. The Learning and Development Manager also presented a draft version of the Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24.

- 6.5 The Project Team was advised that the Induction and Training Programme was being developed on a co-production basis to ensure the best use of member skills and experience, to ensure that induction arrangements met the needs of members and to identify what should be regarded as essential or optional training, as well as the frequency of delivery of such training.

- 6.6 Co-production allows all involved to work collaboratively as equal partners to design, plan, deliver and review councillor training arrangements in order to achieve shared outcomes. It recognises that councillors, officers and training providers all have important contributions to make due to their differing knowledge, skills and experience. We believe that, for co-production to be most effective, all partners should be fully involved at the earliest opportunity when planning or designing councillor training and we therefore recommend that the Project Team or the existing Councillor Development Group should be utilised for

the co-production of the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2024/25 and future years.

- 6.7 We suggest that the role and function of the Councillor Development Group as well as its continued involvement in the co-production of learning and development opportunities for councillors should be formalised and that continuity of membership of the Councillor Development Group should be achieved wherever possible each year, possibly through the inclusion of two members of each political group, and independent members, based on relevant experience and skills.
- 6.8 The Learning and Development Manager reported that the use of Microsoft Teams for the delivery of elements of the Induction and Training Programme had encouraged attendance at training sessions and enabled sessions to be recorded for subsequent delivery, although the level of councillor engagement with e-learning programmes which mirrored sessions made available for officers, was currently disappointing.
- 6.9 The Project Team raised concerns with regard to the completion of 'essential' training by councillors and were assured that this would be considered as part of the finalisation of the Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24, through the identification of all training that was considered to be essential for councillors. We consider that it is important to ensure that all essential training is undertaken by new and re-elected councillors to ensure that they are up to date with the latest information and guidance on specific matters within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme. The Project Team also considers that it is important that relevant training opportunities are extended to the co-opted members of the People Scrutiny Committee, to enable them to effectively undertake their roles around the scrutiny of local education and healthcare services.
- 6.10 We consider that consideration should be given to the inclusion of matters including child and adult safeguarding, the Code of Conduct and the responsibilities of councillors as Data Controllers for the handling of personal data, as essential training requirements within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24 and future years.
- 6.11 We understand that the inclusion of councillor training activities within the individual profile for each member on the Council's website is currently being investigated and we fully support this approach in terms of the transparency of the council's training requirements for councillors.
- 6.12 The Project Team has requested the Learning and Development Manager to ensure that, wherever possible, councillor induction and training activities are spread throughout each year to avoid training 'fatigue', whilst recognising that some essential training needs to be completed as soon as possible in order to enable councillors to undertake the role and responsibilities of quasi-judicial bodies such as the Development Control Committee and the Licensing Committees and Sub-Committees.
- 6.13 We fully support the inclusion of member training around the use and navigation of the Modern.Gov committee management system, the dedicated area of the intranet for councillors and the case management system to be implemented as part of the recommendations arising from the joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22 and support for councillors as needed, to support the transition to a paperless way of working. We have been assured that reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to facilitate the paperless approach and that an assessment of need will be undertaken in this regard, if requested by any member at the commencement of their term of office or at any point during such term.
- 6.14 We recognise that to be effective, councillors require certain skills and experience in key areas and consider that it might be appropriate to undertake a skills audit with

councillors to ensure that the Council has the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise across all key positions and areas of responsibility, and to identify gaps in skills, knowledge and expertise and relevant training needs for new and existing members.

- 6.15 The Project Team also suggests that an 'induction pack' to be co-produced with councillors, be developed for newly elected members as part of the annual Councillor Induction and Training Programme to support the achievement of milestones in the induction process, and that such induction pack be added to the dedicated area of the intranet for councillors.
- 6.16 We recognise the success of the existing 'Buddy' scheme for new councillors, whereby experienced officers assist new councillors to settle into their role as quickly as possible. However, the Project Team considers that opportunities for the refresh of the 'Buddy' arrangements should be considered, including the possible development of a written agreement to set out the scope and timeframe of the 'Buddy' arrangements and a form of 'check list' to support the achievement of milestones in the induction process for new councillors. We consider that review and evaluation should also be undertaken as specific milestones to check that new councillor and their 'Buddy' are satisfied with the effectiveness of the buddy relationship.

7. THE REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

- 7.1 At our meeting in March 2022, we also considered the 'Constitution Review' theme of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project.
- 7.2 The Council's constitution sets out how it operates and make decisions. It also contains the procedures that make sure the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some processes are required by law, while others have been adopted by choice. In 2021 the Council commenced a review of the Constitution, which was led by the General Purposes Committee and was supported by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The recommendations arising from this work are aimed at bringing about change to the attitude and approach for transacting effective and timely business at the meetings of the Council, the Cabinet, the Scrutiny Committees and also informally.
- 7.3 The Chair of the General Purposes Committee updated the Project Team on the current progress of the review of the Constitution following the meeting of the Committee held on 9 February 2023, which had considered revised Council Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules for adoption by the Council. The Chair of the Committee advised the Project Team that there was likely to be a significant immediate and ongoing training requirement for members and officers around the operation of these new elements of the Constitution and we have considered how such training could be used to deliver effective communication and behaviour change between councillors and officers.
- 7.4 We consider that the consultation and engagement process for the review of the Constitution worked well and that all members were able to participate fully in the review process led by General Purposes Committee. In terms of the in-depth scrutiny project, we consider that this approach should be recognised as good practice and be replicated for any future constitutional review processes.

8. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

- 8.1 At the meeting of the project Team in March 2022, we considered the 'Communication Between Councillors and Officers' theme of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project.
- 8.2 Effective communication requires commitment from councillors and officers and is a two-way process, about listening as well as informing. Councillors and officers are servants of

the public and they are indispensable to one another, although their responsibilities are distinct. Mutual respect and communication between councillors and officers is essential to good local government.

- 8.3 As part of its consideration of this theme of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project, the Project Team had requested that it receive a presentation from Paul Tarplett on the view of current communication between councillors and officers, as a result of the ongoing work currently being undertaken by The Public Office. Unfortunately, Paul was unable to attend a meeting of the Project Team in this regard.
- 8.4 We were advised that options for a survey to be undertaken across relevant staff levels to assess the effectiveness of current forms of communication with councillors, was intended to be addressed as part of the response to the feedback report of the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken by the Local Government Association in 2022 and that this would therefore be undertaken outside the auspices of the in-depth scrutiny project. We have requested however, that the results of such survey be made available to all councillors once the findings of the survey have been evaluated.
- 8.5 We also consider that appropriate engagement and consultation should be regularly undertaken between councillors and officers, to support the understanding of experiences of working together and to identify ways to further enhance the success of joint working arrangements.
- 8.6 We suggest that a suite of simple, easy to understand 'Five-Minute Guides' or 'Service Profiles' should be developed for relevant services, to help councillors to understand the roles and responsibilities of individual service areas and to make it quicker and easier for them to find the information they need. We consider that such 'Five-Minute Guides' should include clear process maps and details of service/team structures and that the guides should be published on the website and the councillors section of the intranet, alongside the development of appropriate FAQs to support effective councillor casework activity.

9. HOW COUNCILLORS WOULD LIKE INFORMATION TO BE PRESENTED

- 9.1 At the meeting of the project Team in March 2022, we considered the 'How Councillors Would Like Information to be Presented' theme of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project, to improve the understanding of business needs and new ways of working across the Council.
- 9.2 We have considered some suggestions for improvements to the style and quality of reports presented to committees etc., to ensure that clear and concise reports are presented to councillors at all times and we suggest that options should therefore be investigated for all reports include an 'executive summary' to provide a brief overview of the report and its main points.
- 9.3 We also consider that robust arrangements be introduced/enforced across the Corporate Leadership Team to ensure that reports are fully checked prior to submission to committees etc. to ensure they are accurate, factual and correct, that lengthy documents are not routinely attached as appendices to reports and that hyperlinks are used within reports in preference to appendices where possible.
- 9.4 We also received a presentation with regard to the use of the Council's intranet as a document repository and resource base and the provision of training for councillors in the navigation of the intranet. We consider that the dedicated area of the intranet for councillors should be the default repository and resource base for councillors, in terms of the provision of access to policy documentation and other relevant information. We recognise however, that for the intranet to successfully act as such repository and resource base for councillors,

it is vital that that all published information is regularly reviewed and kept up to date. We also consider that the annual Councillor Induction and Training Programme should include appropriate training to support councillors in the use of the intranet.

- 9.5 We consider that a 'Paperless' approach should be established as the default position for the distribution of agenda and reports for committee meetings etc. to councillors as soon as possible, possibly on an incremental change basis beginning with the cohort of new and re-elected councillors in May 2023, as part of the Council's response to the previously declared climate emergency and to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- 9.6 We believe that Southend-on-Sea City Council is at the forefront of digital infrastructure and innovation and that a move to paperless meetings would provide councillors with an opportunity to lead by example in this regard and demonstrate that they are prepared to embrace new forms of technology to deliver savings, to embrace more efficient working practices and to help reduce the Council's carbon footprint. The Modern.Gov app, which supports the Council's corporate committee management system, enables councillors to access meeting papers from any place, at any time to suit their personal commitments, and the app contains annotation tools to allow councillors to notate and highlight reports etc. as required, in a similar way to the notation and highlighting of paper reports.
- 9.7 The Project Team recognises that some councillors will adapt quicker than others to a transition to paperless meetings and the full use of the Modern.Gov app, and that a high standard of support will be critical to support this transition. We consider that this should therefore include regular training as part of the annual Councillor Training and Development Programme and dedicated one-to-one support from Democratic Services. We also consider that reasonable adjustments should be made to the corporate paperless approach wherever necessary and that an assessment of need should be facilitated (if requested), for any councillor that requires this.

10. JOINT IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY PROJECT 2021/22

- 10.1 At the final meeting of the Project Team in March 2022, we received a brief update on the progress of each of the recommendations arising from the joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22 ('Enabling Councillors to be Effective'), several actions from which were also related to our scrutiny project.
- 10.2 We requested that a full report setting out current progress and achievements against each of the actions arising from joint in-depth scrutiny project for 2021/22 be prepared, which is attached as an appendix to this report.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 We consider that the in-depth scrutiny project was undertaken within the context of the Council's 2050 ambition and priorities and that the proposed outcomes for the project have generally been achieved.
- 11.2 Throughout this report, we have identified some 'quick wins' in terms of aspects of the work programme for the in-depth scrutiny project, alongside the following substantive recommendations to strengthen joint working between councillors and officers.
- 11.3 We therefore recommend as follows:

Context and Expectations of the In-Depth Scrutiny Project

- (1) That expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown during debates at meetings of committees etc. be welcomed and that such expectations be

reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that all members and officers feel included, respected and able to contribute effectively.

- (2) That the Council be encouraged to 'celebrate what works' as part of its response to the feedback report of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge undertaken in 2022.

Induction Training Arrangements and Development Opportunities for Councillors

- (3) That for 2023/24 and future years, training activity previously identified as 'mandatory' within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme, be instead referred to as 'training essential for the role' (or similar).
- (4) That all 'essential' training be undertaken by new and re-elected councillors to ensure that they are up to date with the latest information and guidance on the specific matters within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme.
- (5) That consideration be given to the inclusion of matters including child and adult safeguarding, the Code of Conduct and the responsibilities of councillors as Data Controllers, as essential training requirements within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24 and future years.
- (6) That appropriate options be considered for ensuring the completion of essential training by all councillors.
- (7) That the completion of councillor training activities be included within the individual profile for each member of the Council that is available on the Council's website, to support transparency in terms of the Council's training requirements for councillors.
- (8) That, wherever possible, councillor induction and training activities be spread throughout each municipal year wherever possible to avoid issues of training 'fatigue', whilst recognising that some 'mandatory' training needs to be completed as soon as possible in each municipal year in order to enable councillors to undertake the role and responsibilities of quasi-judicial bodies.
- (9) That consideration be given to the undertaking of a skills audit amongst existing councillors to ensure that the Council has the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise across all key areas of responsibility and, where gaps are identified, to consider how such gaps should be addressed through relevant training for new and existing members.
- (10) That the development of an 'induction pack' of key information for issue to all newly elected councillors as part of the annual Councillor Induction and Training Programme to support the achievement of milestones in the induction process be considered, to include such information as:
 - (a) The Council's current committee structure.
 - (b) The roles and responsibilities of committees.
 - (c) Meeting arrangements and the commitments required of councillors.
 - (d) Floor plans and service area locations for the Civic Campus.
 - (e) Information in respect of the normal business activities of the Council.
- (11) That the proposed induction pack be co-produced with councillors and be added to the dedicated area of the intranet for councillors.

- (12) That opportunities for the refresh of the existing 'Buddy' arrangements for newly elected councillors be considered, including the possible development of a written agreement to set out the scope and timeframe of 'Buddy' arrangements and a form of 'check list' to support the achievement of milestones in the induction process for new councillors.
- (13) That the Project Team and/or the existing Councillor Development Group continue be utilised for the co-production of the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2024/25 and future years.
- (14) That the role and function of the Councillor Development Group as well as its continued role in the co-production of learning and development opportunities for councillors be appropriately formalised and that continuity of membership of the Group be achieved wherever possible each year, on the basis of relevant knowledge, experience and skills.

The Review of the Council's Constitution

- (15) That the Project Team support the co-production of the content and delivery of training on key aspects of the new Constitution, including the proposed revised Council Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, as part of the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24.
- (16) That consideration be given to the inclusion of training on key aspects of the new Constitution as an essential training requirement within the Councillor Induction and Training Programme for 2023/24 and future years, as a means of addressing the perception of a lack of understanding of the Constitution and the limited level of previous engagement with some aspects of the programme, but that that such training not just be provided for newly elected councillors each year and that all members be encouraged to participate in relevant training opportunities.
- (17) That training around the key aspects of the new Constitution should fully recognise the importance of the strategic and operational partnership between councillors and officers that is necessary to deliver the priorities of the Council.
- (18) That, as part of the training offer on key aspects of the new Constitution, in particular the revised Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, consideration be given to the holding of a 'mock' meeting of a scrutiny committee to demonstrate the application of revised constitutional rules and procedures on a practical basis.
- (19) That appropriate flow charts/process maps be developed for the revised constitutional rules and procedures and other relevant business processes to demonstrate their application in practice and that options be investigated for the local branding of such information (e.g., as 'The Southend Way') and its publication on the Council's intranet and website.
- (20) That the approach taken to the review of the Constitution that enabled all members to participate fully in the review process led by General Purposes Committee, be recognised as good practice and be replicated for any future review of constitutional arrangements or processes.

Communication Between Councillors and Officers

- (21) That the results of the survey to be undertaken across relevant staff levels to assess the effectiveness of current forms of communication with councillors, as part of the response to the feedback report of the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in 2022

be made available to all councillors once the findings of the survey have been evaluated.

- (22) That opportunities be investigated for regular engagement and consultation to be undertaken between councillors and officers to improve and support the understanding of experiences of working together and to identify ways to further enhance working relationships.
- (23) That appropriate 'Five-Minute Guides' or 'Service Profiles' be developed for relevant services, to help councillors to understand the roles and responsibilities of individual service areas and that such guides include relevant process maps and FAQs to support training for councillors and the handling of casework activity.

How Councillors Would Like Information To Be Presented

- (24) That, to ensure that clear and concise reports are always presented to councillors, all reports made to committee etc. should be written in plain English using the Council's house style and should include an appropriate executive summary.
- (25) That arrangements be introduced to ensure that reports are fully checked prior to submission to committees etc. to ensure they are accurate, factual and correct and that lengthy documents are not routinely attached as appendices to reports.
- (26) That the existing dedicated area of the intranet for councillors be the default repository and resource base for councillors, in terms of the provision of access to policy documentation and other relevant information, that that all published information be regularly reviewed and kept up to date and that the annual Councillor Training Programme include appropriate training to support councillors in the use of the intranet.
- (27) That subject to the assessment of accessibility requirements in individual circumstances where requested, a 'Paperless' approach be established as the default position for the distribution of agenda and reports for committee meetings etc. to councillors, as soon as possible.
- (28) That the Modern.Gov app be promoted as the Council's corporate committee management system and that full training on the functionality of the app continue be delivered to all councillors as part of the annual Councillor Induction and Training Programme and on a one-to-one basis where appropriate.
- (29) That all members of the Council be encouraged to avail themselves of the training available opportunities available to support a corporate 'paperless' ambition.

Joint In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2021/22

- (30) That the separate report setting out current progress and achievements against each of the actions arising from the joint In-Depth Scrutiny Project for 2021/22, be noted.