Report to:	**Council**
Date:	**17 December 2019**
Title:	**Outcomes of a Political Structures Working Group Meeting**
Portfolio Area:	**Council – Cllr Samuel**
Wards Affected:	**all**

Urgent Decision:	**N**	Approval and clearance obtained:	**Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **Immediately after Council**

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Recommendations:

That Council be RECOMMENDED that:

1. **Council and Committee meeting start times remain as they currently are;**

2. **the Calendar of Meetings (to take effect from May 2020) schedule Informal Council meetings on a Tuesday, providing that there are no clashes with scheduled Committee Meetings; and**

3. **the Member Development Steering Group be asked at its next meeting on 7 January 2020 to advise on the training that would be appropriate to be delivered by Skype.**

1. Executive summary

1.1 The Political Structures Working Group (PSWG) met on 8 October 2019, and considered a range of issues. Those issues were the subject of a report to Special Council on 5 November, 2019.

1.2 That report stated that a further report would be presented to a later meeting of Council, once the Group had considered the outcome of a survey to canvas opinion on start times of meetings.

1.3 The PSWG met again on 2 December, 2019, to consider the consultation responses received.

1.4 This report sets out the PSWG recommendations, having considered the consultation responses.

1.5 The PSWG cannot make decisions, but can make recommendations to full Council based on the issues considered and resulting discussions.

2. Background

2.1 The Council appointed the following Members to the PSWG at the annual meeting on 21 May 2019:

Cllirs K Ball; M Davies; C R Musgrave; L Samuel; J Spettigue and L Wood.

2.2 At the first meeting of the PSWG, Cllr Samuel was elected as Chairman of the Group. At the first meeting, the Group also approved its primary purpose as follows:

The Political Structures Working Group is tasked with making recommendations to full Council on the Council's 'governance arrangements and decision making processes and structures.'

2.3 At that meeting, a number of items were considered, and a report presented to a meeting of Special Council on 5 November 2019, set out the Group recommendations for Council approval.

2.4 The Group had a lengthy discussion at their first meeting about meeting start times and, such was the range of opinions given, it was agreed that a survey be conducted to canvas the views of all Members on this subject. It was also agreed that the results of the survey would be considered at the next meeting of the Group before a recommendation would then be made to the Council.

2.5 The survey was compiled and circulated to all Members for their views. A total of 13 Members responded to the survey.

2.6 The survey included a number of questions to gauge Members views on meeting start times and how meetings should be scheduled.

2.7 A summary of survey responses is attached as Appendix A.

2.8 During consideration of the survey, the Group arrived at the following conclusions:

2.8.1 **Council and Committee meetings start times** – should remain as they currently are;

2.8.2 **Council and Committee meeting days** – should, where possible, only be held on Tuesdays. In discussing the option of using different days for meetings, the Group accepted that a number of Members had to juggle work commitments to be able to attend meetings and for ease of planning, it would be helpful if all meetings were held on Tuesdays;

2.8.3 **The Group then discussed the Informal Council meetings** that were currently held on Mondays. The Group found the Informal Council meetings valuable, but were disappointed that a number of Members were unable to attend as it was on a different day and suggested that the meetings should be moved to a Tuesday. The Group strongly added that the move should be on the proviso that the Informal Council meetings could be scheduled for dates when there would not be a clash with other meetings. This should come into effect from May 2020;

2.8.4 In accepting that **Tuesdays should remain as Member days**, the Group accepted the survey findings that the whole day should be used;

2.8.5 **Timing of Member training events** – the Group accepted the majority wish that training should not be held in the evenings, but did request that when training events were scheduled, that alternative (repeat) dates be included. In discussing training, the Group stated that the recent Budget Workshop was one of the most valuable sessions they had attended, as there was a real sense of being involved in making key decisions. The Governance training provided by an external trainer was also mentioned as a key event to attend;

2.8.6 **Attendance by Skype** – The Group would like to see the Council embrace Skype in an innovative way as a means of saving travel time and expenses for Members and officers. Whilst accepting that some training had to take place on a face to face interactive basis, there was a view that there should be opportunities for training to be conducted by Skype. The Group felt that the Member Development Steering Group would be better placed to come to a view and give advice on the sessions that could use Skype.

3. Outcomes/outputs
3.1 The following recommendations reflect the outcomes and recommendations of the Group:
   a. Meeting start times should remain as they are;
   b. Member Meetings, informal meetings and training should take place on Tuesdays where possible. The Calendar of Meetings to come into effect from May 2020 should reflect this;
   c. The Member Development Group be asked to provide advice on the briefings and training that could be attended by Skype.

In the meantime, officers should use Skype for Member attendance at Briefings, where appropriate.

4. Options available and consideration of risk
4.1 There were no specific risks identified by the PSWG, and the recommendations reflect the Group desire to make decision making transparent and to encourage as many Members as possible to be able to attend meetings.

5. Proposed Way Forward
5.1 The proposed way forward is to accept the recommendations of the PSWG as set out in this report.

5.2 Future meetings of the PSWG will consider the outcome of the webcasting trial. At a later date, the PSWG will convene to consider a review of the Hub Committee.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		Section 9O of the Local Government Act 2000 provides that a local authority may not— (a) cease to operate a form of governance, or (b) vary executive arrangements, other than in accordance with the Act and in making a change in governance arrangements, the local authority must comply with any directions given by the Secretary of State. The Political Structures Working Group can make recommendations to full Council. The Council has the ability to amend and/or update its Constitution throughout the year.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		None arising directly from this report, with the exception of webcasting meetings which, if progressed, may include additional costs
Risk		There are no specific risks attached to this report The recommendations will encourage transparency and seek to support attendance at Briefings by a greater number of Members
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Efficient and Effective Council

Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None arising as a direct result of this report
Safeguarding		None arising as a direct result of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None arising as a direct result of this report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None arising as a direct result of this report
Other implications		None arising as a direct result of this report

Supporting Information
Appendices:
A - Summary of Survey Responses

Background Papers:
Notes of Political Structures Working Group held 8 October 2019