

## **County Council – 19 July 2019**

### **Item 7(b) - Notice of Motion by Dr Walsh**

#### **Governance system - Briefing Note**

The committee system is a method of decision-making where a collective group of elected members meet, debate proposals and make decisions, usually in the public domain. Committees are usually politically proportionate. This method of governance was the predominant method in local government for many years.

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced new systems of governance, including the Leader and Cabinet model for executive decision-making, which was adopted by the County Council and most other local authorities. The committee system was abolished for all but the smallest local authorities.

The County Council implemented individual decision-making by the Leader and Cabinet Members, making full use of the flexibilities of the Act. The County Council also implemented a proactive scrutiny function of politically proportionate scrutiny committees to sit alongside cabinet member decision-making and provide public scrutiny of major decisions prior to their determination by a cabinet member.

The Localism Act 2011 amended the Local Government Act 2000 to enable local authorities to revert to the committee system either if the council itself agreed this, or if a petition of at least 5% of the electorate of West Sussex was received asking the Council to change its governance arrangements.

The Governance Committee considered governance options in January 2012, after the publication of the Localism Act 2011. At the time, the Committee considered that the cabinet system had a number of advantages over the previous system, as an efficient, fast decision-making process with clear lines of accountability that could be easily understood and that the scrutiny arrangements provided an effective mechanism for holding the executive to account.

The Leader and Cabinet executive model is still the most common governance arrangement in local government. Of the 26 two-tier county councils, two operate the committee system. Norfolk County Council went back to the committee system but has since reverted to the Leader and Cabinet executive model. One neighbouring unitary authority, Brighton and Hove City Council, uses the Committee system.

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