
Review of County Local Committees

Background and context

- 1** Following a review of County Local Committees (CLCs) in Mid Sussex last year it was agreed that there should be a full review of all CLCs to consider the impact of changes to CLCs introduced in May 2017 and different options for all CLCs across the county. The Governance Committee has considered and endorsed the findings of the Working Group set up to undertake that review, as set out below.

Findings

- 2** The Working Group concluded that CLCs are fit for purpose and should remain in their current format. CLCs provide a line of communication and an open forum where the public can hold local councillors to account. It is also important for some decisions to be taken at the local level. Feedback from the consultation by the Working Group supported a continuation of the current arrangements. The Working Group could not support any changes that would lead to increased costs.
- 3** Consideration was given to the potential to make savings through removing CLCs altogether, reducing their number or by replacing them with an informal community forum. Members concluded that they play a valuable role and that it is important for the County Council to have a local presence and a mechanism for engagement in the community. The allocation of grant funding through the Community Initiative Fund (CIF) is seen as particularly important in helping to support local action to address the Council's priorities.
- 4** It is important to consider ways of increasing public interest in, and attendance at, CLC meetings. Public engagement typically arises from issues relating to infrastructure or one-off topics of local concern and there is little public interest in the nomination of school governors. As there is no statutory requirement for the nomination of school governors to be approved by members, it is proposed that the delegation for this be moved from CLCs to the Director for Education and Skills, in liaison with the local member.
- 5** The current configuration of CLCs should be retained, with eleven CLCs covering the same geographical areas as at present. The Working Group recognised that that changes introduced in May 2017, with a reduction in the number of CLCs from 14 to 11 had a negative impact, particularly in Mid Sussex and Arun. However, a return to previous arrangements is not supported, given the cost implications. A reduction in the number of CLCs was also not supported, as this would not reflect communities and would discourage attendance and engagement. The Working Group noted that the arrangements in Arun may need further review jointly with Arun District Council to identify any specific areas for improvement.
- 6** As the Working Group recommends no change to the areas covered by CLCs, this means that two Council divisions will continue to be split between two CLCs. These are Bourne (split between North and South Chichester CLCs) and Lindfield and High Weald (split between North Mid Sussex and Central and South Mid Sussex CLCs). The Working Group concluded that the current arrangements provide the best fit with the interests of local communities and parishes.
- 7** There should not be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to CLCs and they should be able to take a flexible approach to best reflect their communities' interests. However, it

is important to explore how CLCs can develop and improve. The Committee supported the Working Group's conclusion that different ways of working should be encouraged, to include

- holding more themed meetings on topics of local interest, alongside the proposed annual Highways meeting.
- Agendas should be dynamic and influenced by issues of local concern raised by residents and parish/town councils and community groups.
- Engagement with the public through 'Talk with Us' sessions should take priority and be given as long as possible on the agenda.
- Best practice should be shared, particularly in how best to encourage public involvement. Best practice guidelines and suggestions for different ways of working should be developed as a checklist or toolkit for members' use.
- Area profiling data should be made available to CLCs to help members identify local priorities and to inform the allocation of CIF.
- Pre-events are considered a useful way of highlighting key Council services or significant issues of public interest.

- 8** All members should be involved in reviewing CLC activity and planning for the year ahead. It is therefore recommended that CLC Chairmen's meetings should become an annual event to which all members are invited.

Conclusions

- 9** The only recommendation requiring County Council approval is the change in delegation for the nomination of school governors. Other recommended areas for improvement or action will be for immediate implementation.

Recommended

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills be asked to delegate the approval of nominations of school governors to the Director for Education and Skills, in liaison with the relevant local member, with the subsequent deletion of Section 1D of the County Local Committee terms of reference, removing nominations and appointments to school and academy governing bodies.

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Background papers

None