

SECTION 8: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Policy and Project Advisory Board

- 8.1 The Council will appoint a Policy and Project Advisory Board to act as source of policy and project advice to the Cabinet and the Council. The main role of the Board is to advise the Cabinet about the formulation and development of policies and projects that will help deliver Council Plan priorities. The Board will be advisory in nature and will not have any substantive decision-making powers delegated to it.

Composition

- 8.2 The arrangements with respect to the composition of the Policy and Project Advisory Board will be as follows:
- The Board will have a maximum of eleven non-executive councillors and, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Housing Act 1989, will reflect the political balance of the Council.
 - The Board will be able to appoint up to two Vice-Chairmen, drawn from those councillors serving on the Board, to lead on specific projects and to chair task and finish groups. The Chairman will be appointed at the Annual Meeting of the Council for the ensuing year.
 - Cabinet Members will be expected to attend the Board and task and finish groups appointed by the Board, as appropriate, to contribute on matters that relate to their portfolio.
 - The Board will be able to co-opt external representatives or appoint advisers as it sees fit in a non-voting capacity.

Membership of both the Policy and Project Advisory Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not inevitably create a conflict of interest. As a rule, councillors should not be involved in scrutinising a decision in which they have been involved directly, but the Board is advisory and it remains the responsibility of the Cabinet to formally take and implement decisions.

8.3 Terms of Reference

The general terms of reference of the Policy and Project Advisory Board are:

- to assist and advise the Cabinet in the development of Policy Framework issues
- to undertake research, consultation and reviews for the purpose of advising the Cabinet on the delivery of priorities in the Council Plan (usually through the task and finish groups)

- to advise the Cabinet at an early stage in respect of the formulation and development of policies and projects that will help to deliver Council Plan priorities
- to assist the Cabinet in reaching decisions on specific issues
- to assist and advise the Cabinet on budget preparation
- to develop and maintain a work programme ensuring that there is efficient use of time

The powers of the Policy and Project Advisory Board are:

- to require the Leader and/or portfolio holders and senior officers to attend meetings to answer questions
- to question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent)
- to co-opt expert individuals on a non-voting basis to assist the Board's work
- to set up task and finish groups to look at specific issues relating to the delivery of the Council Plan or other significant priorities in order to inform decision making by the Cabinet.

8.4 Meetings

The Policy and Project Advisory Board shall have six scheduled meetings annually. Additional meetings may be called as and when required. A Board meeting may be called by the Chairman, by one-third of the voting Members of the Board or by the Head of Democracy and Community.

All meetings of the Policy and Project Advisory Board shall be open to the public to attend except where the item under discussion is considered exempt under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or is confidential under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman will preside at meetings of the Board. In the absence of the Chairman, a Vice-Chairman will take the chair.

8.5 Quorum

The quorum for the Policy and Project Advisory Board shall be 50% of the voting members of the Board (at least six Members).

8.6 Absence of Chairman

In the absence from a meeting of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, a Chairman for that meeting will be appointed.

8.7 Vacancies

On a vacancy arising, the Board will be asked to fill the vacancy at its next meeting.

8.8 Including items on the Agenda and the Work Programme

Any Member shall have the right to ask for an item which is relevant to the Board's functions to be included on the Board's agenda. On receipt of such a request, the Head of Democracy and Community will advise the Chairman and ensure that it is included for discussion at the next meeting of the Progress Group, with a view to it being included on the next appropriate agenda taking into account the Board's work programme. The Member in question shall be invited to attend the meeting.

With the agreement of the Board, a Member of the Council (who is not a Member of the Board) can be invited to take part in discussions at a meeting of the Policy and Project Advisory Board on an item of business under consideration.

Work Programme

The Policy and Project Advisory Board will be responsible for setting its own work programme and shall take into account the wishes of councillors who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council.

The Board's work programme should be guided by the Council's agreed priorities as set out in the Council Business Plan or long-term vision.

A Joint Meeting between the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Policy and Project Advisory Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at least annually to co-ordinate work programmes and avoid duplication.

8.9 Task and Finish Groups

The Policy and Project Advisory Board will have responsibility for establishing such task and finish groups as it considers necessary to assist it in discharging its functions. The terms of reference and working arrangements for each task and finish group will be determined by the Board.

Task and finish groups should be reviewed annually and be time-limited.

The Vice-Chairmen of the Policy and Project Advisory Board will chair task and finish groups and lead specific projects.

All Members, whether or not they are members of the Board, may be appointed to a task and finish group.

8.10 Progress Meetings

The Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Policy and Project Advisory Board, together with cross-party representatives, will meet regularly between meetings to develop, manage and update the Board's work programme, plan agendas and co-ordinate task and finish groups.