

Committee:	Date:
Resource Allocation Sub-Committee	26 May 2021
Subject: Governance Review: Committee Structures Part 1 – General Issues and Principles	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision

Summary

In September 2020, Lord Lisvane submitted the findings of his review into the City Corporation's governance. Members determined that the many proposals therein should be considered in a structured and methodical way in the coming period, with Members afforded sufficient time to read and consider the content and implications. It was noted that the recommendations were extensive and it would be for Members to consider how far they were appropriate and which should be taken forward. It was also agreed that it would be of the utmost importance to ensure that the process provided for all Members of the Court to continue to have the opportunity to input and comment on the Review.

To that end, a series of informal Member engagement sessions were arranged to afford all Members opportunities to express their views on the various aspects of the Review as they are considered. These would then be fed back to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee to help inform its initial consideration of specific items.

Engagement sessions have now been held in respect of the opening part of Section 7 of the Lisvane Review, in relation to the general issues facing the current committee structure and principles in designing any new system. The discussions from those sessions are set out in the appendices to this report.

Members are now asked to consider the various proposals relating to this section of the Lisvane Review, in the context of Members' observations and reflections at the various informal sessions.

Recommendations

That Members:-

- Note the proposals in relation to general issues and principles for the committee structure made by Lord Lisvane in the opening part of Section 7 of his Review (Appendix 1).
- Note the feedback provided by Members through the informal engagement process (Appendix 2).
- Consider the items in respect of the aforementioned various proposals, as set out in this report and Lord Lisvane's Review, and make recommendations as to a way forward.

Main Report

Background

1. In September 2019, the Policy and Resources Committee, proposed the undertaking of a comprehensive Governance Review of the City Corporation. The Committee was conscious that some potentially contentious issues needed to be addressed and that some radical changes may need to be considered. It was, therefore, agreed that the review should be undertaken independently and Robert Rodgers, The Lord Lisvane, was appointed to conduct the Review.
2. The Committee received Lord Lisvane's Review in September 2020 and determined that the many proposals therein should be considered in a structured and methodical way in the coming period, with Members afforded sufficient time to read and consider the content and implications. It was noted that the recommendations were far-reaching and wide-ranging and it would be for Members to consider how far they were appropriate and which should be taken forward. It was also agreed that it would be of the utmost importance to ensure that the process provided for all Members of the Court to continue to have the opportunity to input and comment on the Review.
3. The Governance Review will affect all aspects of the City Corporation's governance and all Members as a consequence. It is, therefore, imperative that any implementation reflects the view of the Court, and it is likely that all Members will have views on particular elements. Their continued input remains integral and incorporating all Members' views within the next steps of the process will be vital in ensuring that the recommendations which are ultimately put to the Court are viable.
4. To that end, a series of informal Member engagement sessions were arranged to afford all Members opportunities to express their views on the various aspects of the Review as they are considered. These would then be fed back to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee to help inform its initial consideration of specific items.
5. As part of this process, engagement sessions have now been held on Lord Lisvane's recommendations within the first part of Section 7 of the Governance Review. This section in totality looks at the City Corporation's committee system and proposes ways of improving efficiency, including restructuring; however, the opening part of this section (which is the focus of this paper) poses a number of preliminary questions or recommendations in relation to various guiding principles that are important in defining the context and form of the future committee structure.
6. In doing so, Lord Lisvane sets out his opinion that the current system is not fit for purpose, having noted a significant amount of criticism relating to this during his review. He cites three previously identified issues (which Members will recall from consideration of Section 4): the number of committees, the practice of multiple committees' involvement in a single issue, and the sequencing of these meetings resulting in unnecessary delays, which should be borne in particular mind when considering any new approach.

7. Views are now sought as to the various proposals put forward by Lisvane in relation to these sections, their implications, and how they might be taken forward.

Lisvane's Recommendations: General Issues

8. Before discussing any proposals for radical restructuring, Lisvane outlines a range of general issues relating to committees. In summary, these recommendations are:

- ***Are Members non-executives? (paragraphs 234 and 235)*** - Lisvane observes that there is a tendency for Members to micro-manage with an imbalance in Member/Officer relationships. He therefore suggests that a review of the scheme of delegations is required. This, in turn, would have a significant impact on the type of decisions made at committee meetings, the nature of the committees required in any new structure, and the operation of meetings themselves.
- ***Committee Staffs (paragraphs 236 and 237)*** - Lisvane argues that the quality of staff should be viewed as a strength of the Corporation but that this may be exemplified further if staff felt more empowered to be pro-active in contributing to the effectiveness of a committee.
- ***Committee reports (paragraph 238)*** - It is suggested that, going forward, efforts should be made for reports to be more concise and outline more clearly the relevant matters for decision.
- ***Committee and Court minutes (paragraph 239)*** - Lisvane advocates that, should webcasting of meetings continue, minutes could become more condensed and streamlined.
- ***Cancel when necessary (paragraphs 240 and 241)*** - Lisvane recommends there should be a greater willingness for committee and sub-committee meetings to be cancelled when there is little substantive business, making more use of urgency and delegated decision processes.
- ***Keep to Terms of Reference (paragraph 242)*** - Lisvane notes that committee terms of reference often change over time and that wording is subject to political compromise in meetings. Therefore, recommendations are made for these to be revisited to improve clarity and minimise overlap of responsibility.
- ***Limit Sub-Committees (paragraphs 243-244)*** - Commenting on the proliferation of sub-committees and their role in the lack of discipline around committee business, Lisvane makes recommendation to restrict significantly the ability to create them and to introduce a process to ensure they could not be set up off-the-cuff, but would be subject to robust consideration prior to establishment.
- ***Joint meetings (paragraph 245)*** - Although not an explicit recommendation, Lisvane comments on the utility of joint meetings of committees under the new structure.
- ***Member Briefing (paragraph 246)*** - Lisvane outlines the benefits of regular informal briefings in ensuring shared understanding of Committee matters

amongst Members and officers and promoting a sense of corporate endeavour.

- ***Chair training and appraisal (paragraphs 248 and 249)*** - Lisvane feels that Chairs should undergo routine training and light-touch appraisals, noting that Chairs should equally be involved in senior officer appraisals.
- ***Handling vacancies (paragraph 250)*** - Regarding vacancies on committees, Lisvane is against the re-advertising of such that might occur during the municipal year.
- ***Green impact assessments (paragraphs 251 and 252)*** - Lisvane recommends that a 'green impact assessment' should be submitted alongside any policy or project proposals and that a lead committee for climate matters should be identified.

Lisvane's Recommendations: Making best use of the talent

9. Next, in paragraphs 254 and 255, Lord Lisvane observes that, while there is a great wealth of talent and skills amongst the Court, appointments to Committees often focus instead on tenure of Court membership. This results in an ineffective application of relevant experience and skills.
10. Lord Lisvane therefore proposes the establishment of a Governance and Nominations Committee (paragraphs 256-263) to assess Members of the Court according to what they may contribute to a role before making recommendations for appointments on Committees.
11. There is no explicit recommendation made as to the composition of this Committee, other than that it should reflect the membership of the Court as a whole, and further detail on the remit of such a body is outlined later in the Review at paragraph 377.
12. However, the prospective establishment (or not) of such a forum and associated process for appointment to committees is a significant element of Lord Lisvane's Review and recommendations. It is, therefore, timely for Members to consider now whether or not they would support the creation of such a committee, or one with any analogous functions, to inform consideration of the overall committee structure at the next stage. Thought would also need to be given to the arrangements for appointments moving forwards (i.e. should the existing elections process, or a variation thereon, be retained).

Lord Lisvane's Recommendations: Restructuring Principles

13. Lord Lisvane begins this part of his Review with an explanation of his guiding principles: Committees should align closely with the Corporate Plan but not be dictated by it; and Committee assigned Chief Officers is not a viable option, with this often resulting in silo working.
14. In summary, his restructuring recommendations are:

- **“Grand” and “Service” Committees (paragraph 266)** - Lord Lisvane argues that Committees should no longer be distinguished as Grand or Service Committees.
- **Size of Committees (paragraphs 267-269)** – Here, Lord Lisvane comments on the current size of Committees, recommending that membership of any one Committee should be between 12 and 15. It is noted that an exception may need to be made for Planning & Transportation, in accommodating his recommendation for panels.
- **[Ward Committees (paragraphs 270-272)]** - Recommendations are made for the abolishment of Ward Committees, including the repeal of SO 23 and the amendment of SO 24. *NB - Members have already discussed this aspect through a separate report].*
- **Multiple membership (paragraphs 273-275)** - These paragraphs outline recommended changes to SO 22 and the limits of membership on multiple Committees. Primarily, this is the introduction of a limit of two Committee posts for any one Member, or four including ex-officio posts, with some exceptions, down from the current eight (which also excludes ex-officio posts currently). The detail of any implication could have significant impact on the composition of certain committees.
- **Service on outside bodies (paragraph 276)** – Lord Lisvane recommends no change to SO 43, which limits service on outside bodies to six.
- **Chair terms (paragraph 277)** – Lord Lisvane suggests that, for consistency, all Chair terms should be for four years (rather than the mix of 3, 4, and 5 held currently).
- **Deputy Chairs (paragraph 278)** – He observes the potential complications of immediate past Chairs becoming Deputy Chairs for a year following their term, under SO 30.3.a. As such, he proposes amendment to this so that outgoing Chairs are ineligible to serve on that Committee during their successor’s term of office.
- **Member terms (paragraph 280)** - Lisvane advocates the introduction of a maximum period of service on all Committees (not including ex-officio memberships), which he recommends should be eight years, with four years then required to pass before reappointment. It should be noted that some existing committees already have maximum term limits or related arrangements.
- **Committee terms of reference (paragraphs 281 and 282)** – Lord Lisvane reflects on the need for changes to the ability of Committees to routinely amend their terms of reference, as well as the process through which this is achieved, so as to introduce more discipline and remove “mission creep” or duplication of purpose that arises across committees (thereby helping to simplify the decision-making process). Terms of references would be separated from the committee appointments process and be governed by their own Standing Order. Amendments to these, including the establishment

of a Sub-Committee, would only be considered by the Court after recommendation by the aforementioned Governance and Nominations Committee (or an alternative body, should such a Committee not be desirable).

- ***Aldermanic seats (paragraphs 283-285)*** – Lord Lisvane comments on the role of Aldermen on Common Council committees and recommends a move away from the convention that Aldermen do not stand for the Chair of certain committees.
- ***Rapporteurs (paragraph 286)*** – Although not an explicit recommendation, Lisvane does suggest thought should be given to the use of “rapporteurs” or “lead Members” on individual committees (as is already the practice on some), to help spread the workload of a committee and minimise the pressure on Chairs.

Conclusion

15. Various proposals have been made by Lord Lisvane in relation to the general issues relating to the Corporation’s committee structure and guiding principles for any redesign, in the opening part of Section 7 of his Review. Members are now asked to consider his proposals and the attendant implications of any decisions, summarised above and set out in the Review. Particular mind should be paid to the views of all Members, made through the informal engagement process and set out in the appendices to this report, when coming to a view.
16. It is intended that any recommendations, subject to points of qualification or clarification, are put to the Policy & Resources Committee for further consideration. Thereafter, proposals are to be submitted to the Court of Common Council meeting, to facilitate the finalisation and implementation of any new arrangements.

Appendices:

- **Appendix 1:** Extract, first part of Section 7: Committees, Governance Review
- **Appendix 2:** Notes from Member Engagement Sessions.