

Proposed Terms of Reference:

Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group

Background

West Suffolk Council is undertaking an interim Community Governance Review of all Parish and Town councils in the West Suffolk area.

This Community Governance Review (CGR) Task and Finish Group is being established to oversee the review process, lead on the public engagement and to use responses from stakeholders to produce draft and final recommendations for Council to consider.

Role and Purpose of the CGR Task and Finish Group

Members will be asked to support the CGR Task and Finish Group, and specifically they will be asked to:

- Oversee the various stages of the CGR, evaluating consultation approaches and advising on potential methods to ensure effective engagement.
- Review consultation responses, assessing how these should inform draft and final recommendations for Council to consider.
- Support the Portfolio Holder for Governance in monitoring the delivery of the Terms of Reference for the CGR.
- Undertake other roles that the Portfolio Holder for Governance considers appropriate.
- Review the process undertaken to inform future reviews.

In order to perform these roles, the Portfolio Holder for Governance shall be a member of the CGR Task and Finish Group.

Membership

Seven Members including the **Portfolio Holder for Governance**.

The Task and Finish group will comprise councillors from across the Council. Membership will be broadly apportioned in line with the political balance and appointees from each group will be agreed by their respective group leader.

Group leaders are encouraged to work together to ensure there is a balance in the geographic representation across the district and ensure there is representation from both rural and urban areas, in particular from the towns of Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket as the parish warding for those towns will be looked at specifically as part of the review.

Continuity and commitment are important to make this group effective. Members on the Task and Finish Group are expected to ensure they make every

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effort to attend meetings and where they are unable to do so, appoint a substitute.

In addition to performing their collective role, members of the CGR Task and Finish Group will be expected to:

- Act as a champion for engagement with the CGR consultation process, promoting consultations with electors and stakeholders.
- Engage with their political groups to ensure all members are kept informed on the CGR process.
- Actively participate in debates at the Task and Finish Group meetings
- Be open minded to alternative proposals or viewpoints.
- Follow the national guidance for administering CGRs
- Read and consider guidance and papers presented in advance of the meeting, being proactive in contacting officers to resolve any points of confusion ahead of the meeting

At all times when taking part in the Task and Finish Group, members will be subject to the West Suffolk Members' Code of Conduct.

Substitutes

Each political group is allowed to appoint one standing substitute. In order to ensure they can effectively contribute to debate when called upon, substitutes are allowed to be in attendance at all Task and Finish Group meetings and will have access to all papers and reports.

Chair

The Portfolio Holder for Governance shall chair the Task and Finish Group and will appoint a Vice-Chair from amongst the members.

The Chair shall be responsible for the effective conduct of meetings and ensuring clear conclusions are reached.

The Chair will also be expected to attend Council meetings to present draft and final recommendations

Quorum

The quorum for meetings shall be 4 members

Frequency

Meetings shall take place in accordance with the stages of the CGR as set out in the CGR Terms of Reference. Meetings will be established to ensure the effective delivery of public engagement, assessment of consultation responses and the drafting of recommendations for Council.

It shall be the decision of the Chair whether meetings will be held virtually, in person, or a combination of both.

Voting

The Task and Finish Group should work towards achieving a consensus but where this cannot be achieved voting shall be by a show of hands with the Chair having a casting vote

Officer Support

The lead officer for the Task and Finish Group shall be the Business Partner for Governance. Administration of meetings will be undertaken by the Democratic Services Team.

Authority

The Task and Finish Group is advisory and has no decision-making powers. Its recommendations will be presented directly to Council for consideration and approval, as and when required.

Confidentiality

As a non-decision-making body, the normal Access to Information Rules do not apply. Members may want to have a free and frank debate, in which they may test concepts and ideas and to share such information when it is in a formative state. These ideas may be subsequently discounted in entirety. Releasing information into the public domain could undermine the subsequent proposals and decisions of the Task and Finish Group and have the potential to damage the Council's reputation.

Papers should therefore (minutes, reports etc) be treated as confidential unless it is stated / agreed otherwise, or the information is already in the public domain. Confidential information should not be shared with other parties, including other Councillors and outside organisations.

Any members who have concerns regarding access to information or the papers of the meeting should raise this with the Monitoring Officer.

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