

SECTION 9

All Party Working Groups

1. Role and Purpose of All Party Working Groups (APWGs)

1.1 Elected Members are at the heart of driving forward the Council's responsiveness to addressing the needs of the County Council's customers and the citizens of Staffordshire. Members have a significant knowledge of their local communities and are a conduit for bringing that knowledge into public service organisations and communicating the actions taken in response to this information back out into communities.

1.2 The APWGs have been established to provide a forum to drive the debate around the long term issues that affect the communities of Staffordshire and how public services, working with the private and voluntary and community sector can plan for and address these issues.

1.3 The APWGs will produce policy options and recommendations to address the long term needs of the communities of Staffordshire. Their recommendations will be considered by Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member or presented to partner organisations as appropriate.

2. Membership

2.1 The APWGs are not Committees of the County Council and therefore are not subject to the formal political balance requirements. Two APWGs will be established.

Political Group Leaders to agree membership (up to a maximum of ten members APWG)

The 2 Groups will be Jointly Chaired and led by the APWG Cabinet Support Members (4).

3. Meetings

3.1 The APWGs will meet at least 3-4 times a year. These meetings will take a rigorous focus on developing new ideas and potential solutions to key challenges. This will include an opportunity to consider new issues within the remit of Group, identify potential work programme priorities and review progress against previous recommendations or proposals.

3.2 The APWGs will also be able to establish specific investigations for the purpose of developing policy proposals for the County Council and/ or partner organisations. Each APWG will be able to establish 1 investigation at a time. Each investigation will need to be effectively scoped prior to the investigation commencing.

3.3 It will be for the Joint Chairs and Group to scope the specific question that is to be answered and the timescale in which the investigation will take place. The Group will move onto its next focus, in agreement with Cabinet, once the previous investigation has been concluded and recommendations drawn up.

3.4 In addition Cabinet may commission an APWG to undertake an investigation into a particular issue.

3.5 Some meetings may be held in private depending on the nature of the evidence being gathered. All investigations will however result in final recommendations which will be published.

4. Agenda items and Work Programmes

4.1 The Joint Chairs will be responsible for drawing up the work programme in discussion with the membership of the Group and Cabinet. The work programme will reflect community priorities over the medium to long term, with Community and Digital First as the key design principle.

4.2 Any Member may request that a particular item be considered for investigation but these will be prioritised in terms of the impact the investigation will deliver.

4.3 The Group can undertake its investigation in whichever way it deems appropriate and may wish to seek evidence from a range of sources including national best practice and the views of service users and key stakeholders to inform its findings and recommendations.

5. The Relationship between the APWGs and Select Committees

5.1 The simplest way of describing the difference between the APWGs and the Select Committees are that the All Party Groups are forward looking investigating the issues that will be facing the communities of Staffordshire over the next 10 to 15 years and beyond.

5.2 The Select Committees will be focussing on the here and now and be backward looking in challenging whether the County Council and its partners are delivering the outcomes for local communities that it has made a commitment to deliver against. The core role of scrutiny is around answering the question of has the Council and its partners delivered positive impact for local communities and what have the unintended consequences been.

5.3 The APWGs may use evidence collected by the Select Committees as part of the evidence base as a starting point for their investigations.