



**Kirklees Council
Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group**

Wednesday 7 August 2019

Present: Councillor Cathy Scott (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Andrew Marchington (substituting for Councillor Munro)

Apologies: Councillor Will Simpson
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Michael Watson
Councillor Alison Munro

In Attendance: Carl Whistlecraft – Head of Democracy Service
Jackie Ingham – Area and Neighbourhood Co-Ordinator
Diane Sims – Senior Communications Officer

1 Notes of Previous Meeting

AGREED as a correct record.

2 Terms of Reference of the Working Group

The Working Group **AGREED**:

- That the Terms of Reference be used as a basis for guiding the Working Group's programme of work for the 2019/20 Municipal Year;

3 Kirklees Question Time Evaluation

Jackie Ingham presented a report setting out the evaluation findings in light of the five Question Time events which had been held following the recommendation of the Democracy Commission. Leading Members had asked the Working Group to carry out this role. The report focussed on the following key areas:

- Format and content;
- Panel composition;
- Facilitation arrangements;
- The approach to collating and asking the questions;
- The audience;
- Venue and location;
- Frequency of events, dates and times;
- Future promotion.

In consideration of the findings the Working Group made reference to the following points:

- The importance of being mindful of the gender balance of the Panel whilst accepting the fact that all political group leaders are currently male;
- The extent to which we are reaching those citizens that would not normally take part or engage in such events;
- The importance of being very clear in communication and marketing information what the events are about and what citizens can realistically expect. Managing expectations is important;
- The value of going to a variety of different places where people are already. Tapping into existing events is a consideration as is looking at different venues such as mosques and sixth form colleges;
- Experimenting with the format in a way that provides opportunities to listen and have informal dialogue as well as answer questions;
- Increasing the pool of facilitators would be beneficial in terms of both variety and assisting in the planning of the events;

The Working Group **AGREED** that:

- Question Time should continue in the 2019/20 municipal year;
- Such events should take place in a variety of settings and venues and should endeavour to use community venues where they prove cost effective;
- Different formats should be piloted in a way that blends the formal Question Time approach with informal opportunities for dialogue between politicians and citizens. Themed sessions should be considered as part of such pilot arrangements;
- Whilst the initial expectation was that Group Leaders form the Panel there should be flexibility to allow groups to put forward who they feel is best suited to be involved dependent on the approach / theme adopted;

- The Working Group has a role in guiding and informing the practical arrangements of each event during the course of the 2019/20 municipal year;
- The outcomes of this discussion are fed back to Leading Members.

4 The Councillor Role – Progress Report

Councillors Scott and Taylor fed back to the Working Group on the work that had taken place thus far to progress the recommendation relating to the changing councillor role.

The accompanying report set out details of workshop events that had taken place with both staff and councillors, the initial outcomes of which were appended to the report. The report explained that the research phase of the work was almost complete, with one further engagement activity outstanding.

In consideration of the report the Working Group made reference to the following points:

- The importance of linking this piece of work with the Officer / Councillor Protocols;
- The ways in which the information gathered would be “boiled down” into a revised role profile whilst not losing any of the important insight collected.

The Working Group **AGREED** that:

- The final engagement phase should be completed;
- The collective findings should then be used to develop a new role profile. HR support should be used as part of this process;
- The new draft of the role profile should be shared with the Working Group and thereafter the officers involved in the engagement and all councillors;
- Pending the outcome of the above work, this should inform the support that councillors receive (from the wider Council and the Democracy Service) to carry out that role.

5 Forward Agenda Plan

The Working Group considered the first draft of the Forward Agenda Plan for 2019 / 20 and **AGREED** that:

- Councillors at the Heart of the Organisation be considered at the September meeting;
- The European Charter of Local Self Governance be added to the Agenda Plan.

6 Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the next meeting of the Working Group will take place on Monday 19 August 2019, 11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m., Leadership Conference Room, Civic Centre 3, Huddersfield.