

REPORT TO:	SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE 20 January 2022
SUBJECT:	Preparations for Mayoral Governance Model and Support for Members
LEAD OFFICER:	Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive

ORIGIN OF ITEM	<p>As part of the budget scrutiny process, Scrutiny Members have identified focusing on specific budget proposals as an effective means by which to test the strength of the overall budget.</p> <p>This report has been prepared in response to a request for more information plans to resource support to Members as the Council moves to the Mayoral model and an update on the wider work to prepare for the implementation of the Mayoral model.</p> <p>In light of the tight deadlines and the scale of other significant work in the Council already underway, the Committee may wish to consider whether this significant programme requires further scrutiny.</p>
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PURPOSE	<p>The Scrutiny and Overview Committee is asked to review the information provided and consider whether it wishes to scrutinise this programme further following receipt of the report of the peer review into the Council's readiness for the implementation of the mayoral model.</p>
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A programme of work is underway to ensure effective implementation of the Mayor/ cabinet model of governance from 9th May 2022. Preparatory activity is underway in a number of teams across the Council, overseen and coordinated by a Programme Board. The Committee may wish to consider whether further scrutiny would be appropriate, given the significance of the change and the tight and fixed deadline for delivery.
- 1.2 General Purposes and Audit Committee received an update on work underway to prepare for the mayoral model at its November meeting. This report includes progress made since that report.

2. UPDATE ON WORK TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL

- 2.1 Whilst much will depend on the elected Mayor and their own priorities, there is work to be done prior to the election to ensure that the new model is operational immediately after the election.

2.2 The Chief Executive has convened and chairs a Programme Board to oversee work to prepare for the implementation of the new model. The programme of work is designed to ensure that work to implement the new model:

- is planned to ensure decisions are made as required in a tight timescale;
- is closely coordinated across multiple Council teams;
- informs and engages Members, staff and external stakeholders and partners as appropriate;
- is contained within available resources;
- enables effective operation of Council services and delivery of the Mayor's priorities in the weeks following the election.

2.3 The following workstreams have been identified within the programme:

- a) **Constitution review and revision:** the Constitution Working Group has been reconvened to inform this workstream and is considering:
- the statutory requirements of the new model, the range of options for the Council to decide and those which will be made by the Mayor when they come into post;
 - draft proposals to present to General Purposes and Audit Committee at its meeting on 3rd March for recommendation to Council to ensure a lawful constitution with effect from 9th May 2022;
 - preparation of proposals for consideration by the Committee for recommendation to Council in relation to the Scheme of Member Allowances;
 - development and implementation of plans for Member briefing and development, including support for both existing and new Members.
- b) **Access to the Council:** in preparation for an anticipated increase in the volume of people contacting the Council/ Mayor's office, the effectiveness and capacity of the Council's complaints, Members' Enquiries and other mechanisms are being reviewed as part of the current improvement programme and in light of experience from other authorities. Work to address backlogs is underway.
- c) **Support arrangements:** this workstream is drafting appropriate arrangements to support both the directly elected Mayor and the civic Mayor, ensuring that these are closely linked to and supported by services across the Council.
- d) **Culture change and staff development:** the change of governance model will not only require a good understanding of the role of the Mayor and how this relates to other Members and officers, but also some changes in organisational culture, building on the wider culture change programme already underway.

- e) **Partnerships:** preparatory work is underway to enable the development of effective working relationships between the Mayor and the Council's partners in the borough and beyond.
- f) **Communications and engagement:** the implications of the new model for the Council's approach to communications and engagement are under review and a comprehensive internal and external communications plan will be developed and implemented.
- 2.4 Officers have been in contact with other local authorities which have the Mayor/ Cabinet governance model, facilitated by the Local Government Association, and this is informing the Council's plans.
- 2.5 The Programme Board is currently meeting fortnightly to ensure close coordination of activity and timely action to address any issues. Each meeting reviews a detailed programme plan and risk register: any significant risks will be escalated to the corporate risk register.
- 2.6 At the all-staff webinar on 12th January 2022, which was attended by over 700 staff, Mayor John Biggs from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets shared his perspectives on the mayoral model of governance and staff had the opportunity to put questions to him. Staff are also able to raise questions and receive answers via the Intranet.
- 2.7 The Council has asked the Local Government Association to conduct an assessment of the Council's readiness to implement the new governance model. The review will consider:
- Whether there is sufficient understanding by members and officers of the governance and culture required in the new model;
 - If appropriate checks and balances are sufficiently addressed in planned constitutional changes;
 - If appropriate plans are in place to support the Mayor;
 - Whether there is appropriate capacity/ resource to ensure that residents receive appropriate responses when contacting the Council and/or the Mayor;
 - What support could be given to mayoral candidates to understand both the role and the Council's wider context.
- 2.8 The review will take place between 24 January and 11 February, and the Council will receive feedback shortly after the completion of the review. The peer team will include both members and officers with experience of the mayoral model of governance:
- Mayor Damian Egan, Mayor, Lewisham (Labour)
 - Cllr Mieka Smiles, Deputy Mayor, Middlesbrough (Conservative)
 - Will Tuckley, Chief Executive, Tower Hamlets
 - Bryn Roberts, Monitoring Officer, North Tyneside

- 2.9 A £330,000 growth provision is included in the proposed 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy for the establishment of the Mayor's Office following benchmarking against other London mayoral boroughs. It is intended that additional temporary support will be added to the current Leader's Office structure immediately ahead of the May elections to provide support to the Mayor following their election. This will include additional casework, correspondence and community engagement capacity. A full restructure of the current Leader's Office service will then be undertaken following consultation with the Mayor on their permanent support needs and priorities.
- 2.10 If required, a further update can be given to the Committee following the completion of the peer review.

3. SUPPORT FOR ALL MEMBERS

Background

- 3.1 In January 2021 the Council's officer and political leadership and opposition leadership was alerted that the service could not meet its minimum statutory requirements, particularly with regard to the production of minutes.
- 3.2 This situation was a result of unprecedented demands on the service: these pressures include:
- The pandemic (both in terms of the impact of staff sickness and the additional workload arising from hybrid meetings)
 - The Council's financial position and a reduction in the budget available to the Democratic Services team to recruit to vacancies
 - A requirement by the Council's external auditors for all questions and answers asked at formal meetings to be minuted (since reversed)
 - An increase in the number of meetings since the RIPI and in the length of those meetings, compounded further by changes to meeting dates and planned agendas, increases in the number of delegated decisions and use of special urgency powers
 - Work to implement the Scrutiny Improvement Review by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and to prepare for the referendum
 - Several members of the team have recently given notice to leave (mutual aid has been requested from neighbouring authorities and arrangements are being put in place to prioritise resources to maintain support to ongoing meetings and address the minutes backlog)
 - Attempts to appoint to vacancies have proved unsuccessful to date.
- 3.3 During this challenging period, the service has prioritised support to formal decision making meetings. This has limited the ability of the service to perform other elements of its role, including:
- Support for member development
 - Consistent management of the meeting cycle across all committees, with associated support to Chairs and ensuring follow-up of actions agreed by committees

3.4 The service has not historically been resourced to deliver other functions which are part of the role of Democratic Services as follows:

- Dissemination of relevant information to all members
- Leading on the corporate Forward Plan
- Member support – ie assistance to backbench councillors with administrative matters.

Plans to address the challenge

3.5 The Chief Executive has invited the Local Government Association to undertake a peer review of the Democratic Services function in Croydon, and in particular to consider what staffing resources are required and how they should be organised, both now and looking ahead in preparation for the Mayoral model of governance. The review is being led by senior local government professionals with experience of:

- HR and organisational development
- Democratic services in a London Borough with the Mayoral model

3.6 The review is being undertaken during the first two weeks of January and will report back to the Council by the end of the month.

3.7 On receipt of the peer review report, officers will review the current team structure in light of its findings and prepare a proposal for consideration as part of the budget setting process in February/ March 2022. Until this process has been completed, it will not be possible to confirm the level of support available to Members from May 2022.

3.8 The Member Learning and Development Panel and Ethics Committee at their forthcoming meetings (27 January and 9 February respectively) will consider the proposed plans for Member induction in May 2022. It will not be possible to support implementation of those plans unless sufficient resources are identified.