



# Committee Report

## ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Meeting	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>
Date	<b>11 DECEMBER 2023</b>
Title	<b>A CHANGED DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE FOR A CHANGING CULTURE</b>
Report of	<b>CLLR GEOFF BRODIE, ON BEHALF OF THE FUTURE GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP</b>

---

## INTRODUCTION

1. With a second 'no overall control' administration after the last three IW Council elections, it was becoming clear to some that one-party/group Cabinet decision-making does not reflect the wishes of the Island electorate who appear to want councillors to work together. Many councillors are of the view that this will be the position at future elections, at least in the short to medium term.
2. The current administration's Cabinet consists of 8 councillors from a 'ruling group' of 13, from a 39-member Council, propped up by just about enough members of other groups (and none) to hold the leadership when it matters.
3. This is hardly democratic or stable. It leads to significant cultural difficulties with more than half the Council excluded from the decision-making of the Council; something that could be avoided with a politically-proportionate Committee system.
4. To address this, at the July 2023 Full Council a Motion proposed by Cllr Geoff Brodie for the IW Council to consider moving to a Committee system of decision-making at its January 2024 meeting was agreed unanimously.
5. Consequently and in accordance with the agreed Motion a politically-proportionate working group was established which met fortnightly during September and October. The group consisted of 4 Conservatives, 3 Alliance (including 2 Independents and 1 Green), 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 Empowering Islander and 1 unaligned.

6. At its first meeting Cllr Brodie was elected as the group chair and its mandate from Full Council was agreed in summary as:
  - Make recommendations to Full Council (Jan 2024) regarding moving to a Committee system, including structure, decision-making powers, etc.
  - The intention being to recommend a Committee system for approval and to bring about change on and from 2024 Annual Council.
  - Consider how other Local Authorities have done this and what lessons were learnt.
  - Consider examples of best practice.
7. It was also agreed between Cllr Brodie and the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, Cllr Andrew Garratt that a Report from the Group should be submitted to his December Committee meeting for information only and then referred to January Full Council.

## **METHODOLOGY**

8. At the first working group meeting the following study groups were established with a brief to feedback to the wider group regularly and definitively by the end of October. The study groups of 2/3 cross-party members looked at:
  - Changes to a Committee system elsewhere
  - Views of our senior officers/colleagues and elsewhere
  - Possible structures of a Committee system
  - Cabinet-based alternatives to Committees
9. We also had a media release inviting comments from Islanders, with encouragement to participate from Cllrs Brodie and Garratt.

## **FEEDBACK & CONSIDERATION**

10. The study groups reported back to the parent group throughout September and October. This helped inform members in reaching their decision.
11. For example, everyone on the working group had the opportunity to research examples of changes – and decisions not to change - elsewhere. The Chief Executive offered some valuable input via Cllr Quirk, who also spoke to retired officers elsewhere. Cllr Lucioni provided feedback from some of our own officers and from the LGA. Cllrs Garratt and Churchman provided the framework for the recommended future structure of our Council. Cabinet-based alternatives were looked at but did not command majority support.

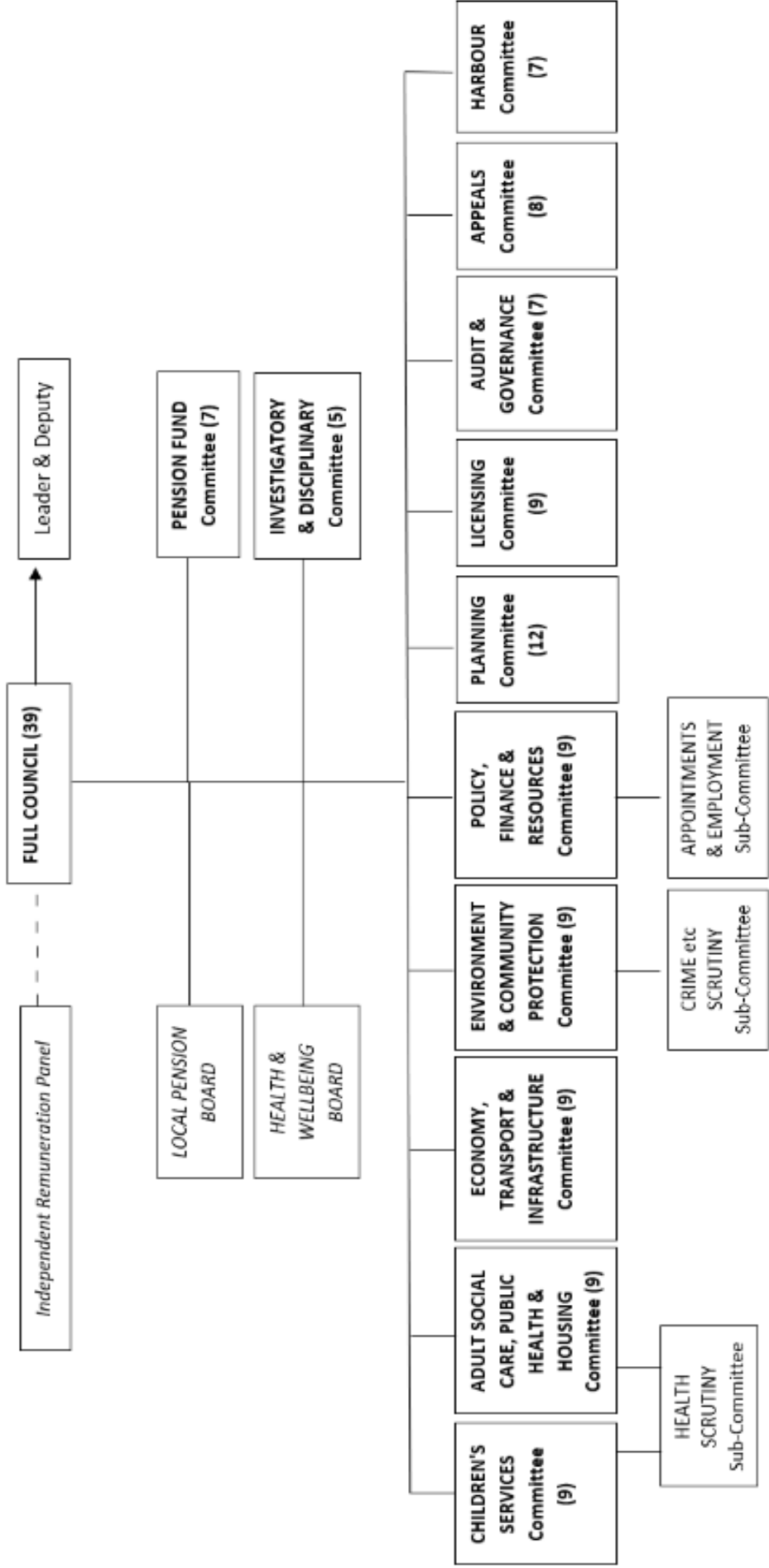
12. There was also some very limited feedback from islanders, which was almost entirely in support of change to a Committee system.

## **GROUP DECISION**

13. After due consideration of the pros and cons of change, at a meeting in late October the group agreed unanimously (with one abstention) the following should inform the composition of this Report: *That the working party will recommend a move to a Committee system in principle from May 2024*
14. Cllr Brodie then drafted this Report, which was presented to group members for comment, criticism and editing in mid-November and then agreed at its final group meeting on 27 November.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO JANUARY 2024 FULL COUNCIL**

15. That the Isle of Wight Council will move to a politically-proportionate Committee-system from its annual meeting on 15th May 2024.
16. That the existing politically-proportionate Future Governance Working Group should now work with the Monitoring Officer and other relevant senior officers to agree proposals for constitutional change to enable this transition. There should be a progress report to March 2024 Full Council.
17. Rule changes that need to be addressed are listed at Appendix 1.
18. That the preferred Committee-system structure should match or bear a close relationship to the following:



## **THANKS**

19. My thanks to all the members of the working group. In particular Cllr Bacon and Cllr Quirk who were able to attend all the sessions and always posed important challenge. The others – Cllrs Churchman, Ellis, Garratt, Jarman, Lever, Lucioni, Mosdell and Ward – all made a valuable contribution. The Monitoring Officer, Mr Chris Potter also provided helpful information at the start of the process.
20. Also our thanks to all colleagues, staff (both internal and external) and members of the public who offered us their views and suggestions. Our public consultation did not set the Island on fire, but this consideration is by its very nature quite arcane.

## **APPENDICES**

21. Appendix 1 - Rules requiring review
22. Appendix 2 - Recommended structure notes

**Cllr Geoff Brodie, on behalf of the Future Governance Working Group**