

Appendix 8.2 – Recommendations of the Governance Review Panel

Recommendation 1:

Put residents at the heart of decision making, building residents' trust in the Council's openness by publishing a strategic statement of how the Council will engage and ensuring that consultation and engagement activities are consistent in:

- Taking place at the earliest possible opportunity;
- Actively listening to residents;
- Being clear about their goals and how responses will be considered;
- Being joined up and shared across different council services;
- Engaging existing community groups and forums;
- Following latest best practice to engage with hard to reach and underrepresented residents; and
- Being reported to decision makers, clearly detailing how responses have influenced recommendations.

Recommendation 2:

Ensure that local communities are at the heart of how council services are delivered in their areas by building on existing work to deliver locality based services and devolution pilots. In doing so develop joined up and innovative options for more neighbourhood based involvement in decision making.

Recommendation 3:

Provide Members and residents with increased opportunities at an early stage in the process to influence decision making by producing and proactively communicating a forward plan detailing forthcoming decisions, including annually recurring decisions and key strategies and policies, at the earliest possibility and no later than six months in advance of the decision being taken.

Recommendation 4:

Make decision making more open and transparent for Members and residents, by:

- Reviewing Croydon's interpretation of the statutory definition of a key decision and if necessary amending the Constitution to ensure sufficient emphasis on community impact and producing guidance to ensure consistent interpretation and clarity of practical application, including types of decisions that the Council always deems to be key decisions;
- Publishing a guide on decision making processes to supplement the Constitution, and setting out how different services can be contacted and the different roles and responsibilities of councillors and key officers, and how Members and residents can participate in the Council's decision making processes, including when decisions are delegated; and
- Ensuring that there is a consistent standard of decision making report writing that details why recommendations are being made, what background papers are available and what influence the views of Members and residents have had on development of the recommendations.

Recommendation 5:

Provide Members and residents with more opportunity to scrutinise and challenge decision making by fully endorsing the open data approach to information provision and giving regular progress updates on how the Council is improving its use of digital means to make information available and easily accessible.

Recommendation 6:

Ensure the Council maintains a culture that enables effective governance by periodically reviewing and monitoring how Members work with one another and how Members and officers work with each other, and considering where improvements might be made including:

- Clarifying the different roles of Members and officers, including statutory officers, and their relevant rights and responsibilities;
- Agreeing a set of high behavioural standards for decision making meetings; and
- Enhancing the understanding and awareness of the governance framework, the Constitution, codes of conduct and Member/ officer protocols.

Recommendation 7:

Reinforce the role of ward councillors as community leaders by ensuring that Members are kept informed and engaged on matters affecting their wards and are always aware of official council engagements and events.

Recommendation 8:

Support all Members in fulfilling their roles, particularly by:

- a. Agreeing systematic ways that officers communicate information and providing advice that helps Members in different roles to understand and influence the delivery of council services, including information relating to strategy and policy delivery and service performance;
- b. Considering if the reintroduction of dedicated support for all elected Members would be the most effective way of coordinating Member support activities;
- c. Enhancing the Members' enquiry system to provide a more agile and responsive service that fully supports Members in handling case work;
- d. Ensuring that there is senior political buy-in to develop the Member learning and development offer, making it more effective in meeting Members' needs and improving the induction programme for new councillors;
- e. Developing a training programme that helps all officers and Members better understand respective roles, the decision making process and working in a political environment; and
- f. Considering the enhancement of ICT support for Members.

Recommendation 9:

Ensure the decision making structure fully supports participation by creating more purposeful opportunities for non-Cabinet Members and residents to consider and influence planned decisions before they are taken. Specifically, the Council should

enhance the existing Leader and Cabinet model by strengthening the collective Cabinet, establishing the hybrid arrangements which introduce Cabinet Member Advisory Committees, appropriately revising the scheme of delegation and ensuring the necessary changes are reflected within the Constitution.

Recommendation 10:

Improve the effectiveness of Council meetings by reaching a cross-party agreement on desired changes, underpinned by consideration of the principles and proposals set out in the Governance Review report.

Recommendation 11:

Recognising public dissatisfaction with Planning seek to enhance understanding of the planning process by:

- Considering recommendations detailed in the PAS report and ensuring those form a key part of the Planning Committee's journey to improve resident experience when engaging with planning; and
- Developing more proactive, cross-party working in the area of policy discussion, setting and revision

