

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee



3rd June 2024

Title	Financial Reporting Working Group
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Terry Collier, Chief Finance Officer
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision.
Recommendations	<p>Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the re-establishment of a Member Working Group focused on Financial Reporting. 2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the Working Group 3. Agree the membership of the Working Group
Reason for Recommendation	Following on from the Peer Reviews, Councillors have indicated that they would like to work with officers to help them to understand how reports could be made more useful for Councillors.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Member Financial Reporting Group was established during 2023-24 and had cross Group representation. • Following on from past Peer Reviews both Councillors and Officers are keen to continue to improve the clarity and usefulness of financial reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to focus on how we can continue to improve the clarity and understandability of financial reports, to assist councillors to engage with those reports and better understand them
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the 2024 Annual Council re-establish the Working Group to continue, for the Working Group to make further recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To re-establish the Group One members of the Group identified, officers will confirm the date and time of the next meeting of the Group.
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1.1 This report seeks to have the Committee’s approval to re-establish a Members’ Working Group to focus on Financial Reporting, to work with the Finance Officers to help them identify how reports can be made easier to understand for councillors, more visual and ensure key points are effectively summarised. Some of the outputs may then feed into the officer Centros project looking to apply the enhanced functionality of the upgraded financial platform. Previously the Working Group generated the proposal, which has now been adopted, of implementing the “four square” summary at the start of reports going to Committee

2. Key issues

2.1 Both the LGA Finance Peer review in 2020 and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review in 2022 identified the importance of focusing on ensuring councillors understand financial reports and that the reports are presented in ways which aid the understanding of councillors.

3. Options analysis and proposal

3.1 Option 1 (Preferred): To set up a working group made up from Members of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. The Working Group to consist of at least three councillors. To agree a Terms of Reference- see Appendix 1 for a suggested Terms of Reference.

3.2 Option 2: Do not set up a working group.

4. Financial management comments

4.1 None directly. Resourcing impact will be finding the time to have the discussions and then if any proposals require time in terms of implementation (amending system reports etc).

5. Risk management comments

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Procurement comments

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Legal comments

7.1 None.

8. Other considerations

8.1 None.

9. Equality and Diversity

9.1 All members of the Committee are invited to participate.

10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1 The Working Group will commence as soon as practicable. It is suggested that initially the Working Group aims to meet up to three times before reporting back. Initial dates of Monday 10th or Monday 17th June have been pencilled in for the first meeting of the re-established Working Group

12. Contact

12.1 Terry Collier t.collier@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Terms of Reference