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## Accountability and Transparency

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Folkestone & Hythe District Council is run on a cabinet system which means that many major decisions are made by a small group of councillors and the ordinary backbench councillors are excluded from the bulk of the decision making. Full council decides on policy and budget issues – all other decisions are made by cabinet with the council officers being responsible for operational matters.

In September 2019 the council agreed to set up a cross-party working group to look at the possibility of moving over to a committee system or alternative system.

In Feb 2020 the Green and Lib Dem group leaders were appointed to the Tory-led cabinet with a free vote i.e. not a coalition (The Labour Party did not permit its group leader to accept the offer of a cabinet position). Although this is a welcome step and means that other views are put forward at cabinet meetings, we don't feel that it goes far enough and believe that the cabinet system leaves too much power in the hands of the leader of the council.

We have been pushing for the council to move over to a committee system. The committees would still need to need to have a political balance in line with the election results but it would give the backbench councillors chance to become much more involved in the running of the council.

The working group last met in October 2021. You can read the minutes here: [click link](#)

It was agreed that a report prepared by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, setting out the work to date and factors for consideration in changing governance models, be considered at Full Council in January/February. The report would be for noting

Cabinet decisions can be subject to scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee but rules for call-in are very restrictive and there have been very few call-ins in recent years.

In line with good practice, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been chaired by a member of the opposition, a Green from May 2019 to May 2021 and now by one of the Labour councillors with a Green vice-chair.

The way O&SC works has changed considerably since our councillors were elected to the District Council. Previously the committee considered the items on the cabinet agenda the day before the cabinet meeting, which was clearly too late to make any difference and in any case cabinet could and usually did ignore the recommendations from O&SC.

Now O&SC gets involved in policy making much earlier in the process and so has a real chance to make a difference.

and a decision would then be put to Full Council at the annual meeting in May. Subject to that decision, any changes to existing governance arrangements would take effect from May 2023.

Unfortunately that vote was lost, the votes being:

FOR: Councillors Davison, Fuller, Gane, Keen, Keutenius, J Martin, McConville, Meade, Prater, Shoob, Treloar, Wade, Whybrow, Wing (14).

AGAINST: Councillors Mrs Berry, Brook, Miss Carey, Collier, Field, Goddard, Godfrey, Hills, Mrs Hollingsbee, P Martin, Meyers, Monk, Mullard, Peall, Rolfe, Wimble (16).

This is why we need more people to proactively engage with politics, come forward to help, to stand as candidates and create the type of politics and ensure the elected representatives that our area deserves.



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Promoted by Malcolm Watkinson on behalf of Shepway Green Party at White Lodge, Church Road, New Romney, TN28 8EX.

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