

Consultation on Proposed ICE Governance Changes – Municipal Group Scotland Comments

At your consultation request, we are contacting you regarding the proposed changes to the Governance of the Institution of Civil Engineers, specifically the change in the Trustees, from a 44 member Council directly elected by the membership of ICE to an internally appointed 12 member Trustee Board with only three members directly elected by the membership. The pretext for this change is to bring the ICE into compliance with the recommendations of the Charity Governance Code and to provide a “more agile” decision making body.

Our great concern is that this significant change to our 200 year old Institution is being made without any consultation with the membership to discuss the “risks” of the current governance structure and the options which are available and have been considered to resolve them. This has been compounded by extremely poor and inadequate communication with the membership in advance of a ballot where this was one of several questions asked and achieved a voting rate of less than 9% of the membership. Such a fundamental change deserves a thorough review of why change is needed and if so what options should be considered through a full consultation with the membership.

It is for these reasons that two former Presidents of the ICE initiated a debate within the membership which led to a Special General Meeting of the ICE being convened on 31st July 2018. At this meeting a debate regarding the process undertaken in arriving at the proposal followed and the three motions criticising the process followed and requiring a full consultation on revised governance procedures before a further ballot of the membership were passed with significant majorities.

The ICE Council accepted the result of the SGM and instigated this Review to consider options for the future governance of the ICE. However ICE Council has also decided to continue with the implementation of the current revised proposals. This was both premature and undemocratic as the necessary consultation (as required by the Charity Governance Code) has yet to take place.

These changes to the Charter of the ICE have to be approved by both the Engineering Council and the Privy Council. It is therefore vital to await this Review has completed the proper consultation and communication with the ICE membership and a further ballot of the membership has taken place on any revised proposals, probably in 2020, before agreeing to any major change to the governance of our Institution.

The ICE has been in existence for 200 years and is a widely respected professional body. It should not be rushing into significant governance changes without a full and proper consultation with its membership. A delay in any changes in governance of just over a year to allow this process to be carried out properly and thoroughly is imperative if it is to retain the confidence of its members and its worldwide reputation.

Graeme Malcolm (Chair)

On behalf of Municipal Group Scotland

8 April 2019