

 Executive – 3 December 2008		Agenda Item No.
Title	Council meeting agenda format	
For further information about this report please contact	Robert Inman	
Service Area	Members' Services	
Wards of the District directly affected	None	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		
Background Papers	None	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	30 October 08	Chris Elliott
Chief Executive	13 November 08	Chris Elliott
CMT	13 November 08	
Section 151 Officer	13 November 08	Mary Hawkins
Legal	-	-
Finance	4 November 2008	Marcus Miskinis
Portfolio Holder(s)	31 October 2008	Michael Doody
Consultation Undertaken		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The format of agendas for Council meetings has remained unchanged for many years although some procedural changes affecting Council meetings were made when the new Executive/Overview and Scrutiny arrangements were introduced.
- 1.2 This report outlines proposals to change the format of Council agendas in attempt improve the relevance of meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive consider recommending amendments to the Council Procedure Rules, as contained in the Constitution, regarding the business considered at Council meetings.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Council meetings tend to be dominated by the approval process of a raft of minutes of committee meetings. In the vast majority of cases the decisions are delegated and so the Council is not able to change most decisions nor does it often prompt debates about any other than the most contentious of items. Invariably this means that issues generated from outside committee reports such and petitions or presentations are rarely debated nor do they inspire community interest in the Council as a body; this is demonstrated by the frequent absence of any member of the public attending.
- 3.2 However, this situation exists at a time when councils are being called upon to be more responsive to a wide variety of issues on behalf of the communities they represent and to act as community leaders. In an effort to help make the Council meetings more relevant a number of changes are proposed so that, by reducing the amount of items being included but which are not discussed, this should provide additional time for discussing items such as Notices of Motions, petitions, and any items which have been referred to the meeting under the call-in procedure as well as the opportunity for questions to Portfolio Holders. This would accord with a general and national approach of making councils more responsive to the issues faced by local communities rather than being dominated by the process of approving minutes of meetings already held and concluded.
- 3.3 There will be a minor benefit of reducing printing costs.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 An alternative to making any changes to the procedures followed at Council meetings would be to continue with the existing, long established procedures.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Due to the need to reduce expenditure over coming years as much as possible, all services are being required to review budgets with a view to achieving significant savings in costs.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 There are no policy issues relating to this issue.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Section 4 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the Constitution sets out how meetings of the Council will be conducted.

7.2 The Order of Business in Section 4 describes this as follows:

- (a) To choose a person to preside if the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent.
- (b) To deal with any business required by statute to be done before any other business.
- (c) Apologies for absence.
- (d) To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the last meeting of the Council.
- (e) To deal with any business expressly required by statute to be done.
- (f) To receive such communications as the Chair or the Chief Executive may wish to present to the Council.
- (g) Chairman of the Council's announcements.
- (h) Public submissions.
- (i) Petitions and questions.
- (j) To dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
- (k) To receive and consider the minutes of the Executive and committees
- (l) To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received.
- (m) To consider items, notice of which have been given under Procedure Rule 6 in the order in which notice has been received.
- (n) To authorise the sealing of documents so far as the Council's authority is required.
- (o) Other business, if any, specified in the summons.

7.3 With regard to item (k), the current procedure is for the Chief Executive to call the individual minute numbers of the Executive meeting thereby providing the opportunity for any Councillor to raise items for comment or discussion.

7.4 Following the conclusion of calling through the Executive minutes, the reports of the various committee meetings are then moved separately and Members, again, have the opportunity to raise any item for comment or discussion.

7.5 Virtually all items which are referred to in the various minutes are resolutions and there are very few items being presented to the meeting as recommendations. Consequently, there is a considerable amount of paper used in producing the agendas for Council meetings but most of the information set out is purely for information with few items being raised for debate.

7.6 It is suggested that the current arrangements should be amended so that the items appearing on the agenda would be as follows:

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the last Council meeting
3. Communications and Announcements
4. Public Submissions
5. Memorials and Petitions
6. Questions Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 7(2)
7. Questions to Portfolio Holders
8. Report of the Executive and any recommendations from committees

- 9. Notices of Motion
- 10. Common Seal

- 7.7 With regard to agenda item 8, only the minutes of the Executive meeting would be included and these would be divided into Part 1: recommendations, and Part 2: resolved items.
- 7.8 The recommendations would be called individually so that they could be commented on or discussed, whereas the resolved items would be called en bloc and any item could be raised for comment or discussion.
- 7.9 The minutes of all the other committee meetings would not be printed and included on the agenda except when, rarely, there is a recommendation from a committee which needed to be referred to the Council meeting for a decision.
- 7.10 Agenda item 7: *Questions to Portfolio Holders* would be the opportunity for any Councillor to raise a question for response by a Portfolio Holder on issues within their area of responsibility. This would be an additional opportunity to raise questions as the existing opportunity, under Procedure Rule 7, would remain unchanged.
- 7.11 It is proposed that any question under agenda item 7 must be submitted to the Chief Executive by 9 am on the day before the Council meeting. The question would then be printed and circulated at the meeting. A verbal response would be given by the Portfolio Holder but would not be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 7.12 The minutes of all the other committee meetings would be printed and circulated with the agenda for the next meeting of the respective committees for approval as a correct record.
- 7.13 In order to assist Members, the minutes of the committees would be published on the website as soon as the draft version has been approved by those involved in the production of the minutes. This would be an improvement in the current arrangements when often minutes are not available until they have been printed and produced as part of the Council agenda.
- 7.14 It is proposed to introduce a new committee management system by the end of the financial year which will considerably assist with accessing committee minutes and other information.
- 7.14 It would be necessary to agree to amend the Constitution to allow this new arrangement to be implemented.
- 7.15 If approved, it is suggested that the new arrangements should be introduced immediately on a trial basis.