

**Report of the City Solicitor**

**Report to General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Subject: Amendments to Council Procedure Rules**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

In June the General Purposes Committee agreed that a number of changes be introduced, for Council meetings on a trial basis (for the July and September meetings\_.

In summary those proposals were that;

- There be a new start time - 1pm rather than 1.30pm;
- Community Committee Report contributions be restricted and time limited;
- That the Backbench Community Concern Item be removed from the Council proceedings, and in it's place;
  - consideration of Health and Wellbeing Minutes for up to 20 minutes be introduced;
  - that a new Devolved Matters Report item, for up to 30 minutes, be introduced.
- That the deadline for amendments be altered to be 10am on the day before Council
- Consideration of White Paper motions be extended to 45 minutes with increased speaking time;

This report considers feedback from political groups on the outcome of the trial period to date.

General Purposes Committee is asked to;

- Approve an extension of the trial period to allow for further consideration of the arrangements during the remainder of the municipal year.
- Request a further report to the May 2016 meeting of this committee in order for recommendations to be made on the adoption of revised Council Procedure Rules to the May 2016 Annual Council meeting.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report presents feedback from political groups on changes to the operation of Ordinary Council meetings that have been in operation for a trial period at the July and September council meetings.

## **2 Amendments to Full Council Procedure Rules**

- 2.1 Following cross party discussions a number of amendments to existing arrangements were introduced on a trial basis for the July and September Council meetings. The background to those amendments and the feedback, which has been received from political groups, is set out below.

### **Start time for Ordinary Full Council Meetings**

- 2.2 To accommodate the proposals set out in respect of White Paper motions, there was a requirement to add further time into the Council meeting. On balance Leaders and Whips were supportive of an earlier start time for Council meetings of 1pm.
- 2.3 Group Whips have been generally supportive of this earlier start time, although as yet the circumstances have not arisen whereby Council business has needed to be varied to accommodate the appointment of Honorary Aldermen<sup>1</sup>.

### **Backbench Community Concerns**

- 2.4 For the past two Municipal Years a period of 6 ten minute blocks have been reserved in Council business to consider Backbench Community Concerns.
- 2.5 This defined area of business has proved useful in enabling backbench members a platform to introduce concerns into the Council meeting. However, given the enhanced remit for Community Committees to lead on local issues, there is now cross party support for the removal of this formal item of business from the full Council proceedings.
- 2.6 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change.

### **Devolution Matters/Health and Wellbeing Board Minutes**

- 2.7 Groups Leaders were collectively supportive of introducing two new elements to Council business, both of which are enabled by the time freed up from the removal of Backbench Community Concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Whips remain of the view that, in circumstances where full Council are appointing Honorary Aldermen, that these meetings commence at 1pm and that the business of the Ordinary Meeting be adjusted by way of a Whips' agreement to facilitate, as far as is possible, a 7.30pm conclusion of the Ordinary Council business.

- 2.8 The first related to the introduction of a reporting process to Council on matters devolved to, or of significance in respect of the work/operation of, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The basis of this item has been regular report, essentially summarising the business considered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and issues of significance to the devolution negotiations taking place. The report has been considered after the Tea Break, for a time limited period of 30 minutes which has enabled all groups the opportunity to contribute to the debate.
- 2.9 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change.
- 2.10 In addition Group Leaders were supportive of a defined period of time (twenty minutes under the minute's item) for the consideration of the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board and for the procedures to allow for any unused time from this slot to be allocated for the consideration of Executive Board minutes.
- 2.11 Health and Wellbeing Board Minutes were considered and fully debated at the July meeting. At the September meeting no Health and Wellbeing Board minutes were due for consideration so additional time was added to the consideration of the Executive Board's minutes.
- 2.12 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change..

### **Receipt of Community Committee Reports**

- 2.13 Group Whips have previously discussed the mechanism by which Community Committee reports are routinely considered at Council meetings; political groups hold a number of different views.
- 2.14 The changes introduced for the trial period sought to balance a divergence of views across political groups on this item of business. During the trial period the consideration of this business was time limited to no more than ten minutes per committee report, with contributor's speaking time being limited to no more than two minutes.
- 2.15 With four of the ten Community Committees having reported to Council under this new format, the Administration remains of the view that this item of business enables important contributions to be made in the council chamber which link communities to the council.
- 2.16 Following the trial period Opposition Groups have expressed a preference for a combined single annual report from Community Committees. If the current format is to continue, then the Conservative and Green Groups continue to be of the view that each single report should be simply moved and commented upon by the Chair (without further debate).
- 2.17 Officers understand that there remains a divergence of view amongst political groups as to how this item of business should be dealt with by full Council.

## **White Paper Motions**

- 2.18 Two changes to the time limits for White Papers have been introduced as part of the trial. Firstly an extension of the period of time for debating White Paper Motions from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.
- 2.19 Secondly in acknowledgment of comments received from Members concerning the too limited speaking times for Members contributing to debates and summing up, the speaking time for those moving a White Paper motion has been increased to 5 minutes and all other contributions have been increased to 4 minutes.
- 2.20 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change.

## **Other Speaking Rights and Amendments**

### Speaking rights

- 2.21 The trial period also removed restrictions on Seconders from the same group being permitted to speak. Those Members being able, in the case of White Paper motions, to speak for up to four minutes, and for all other business up to 3 minutes.
- 2.22 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change.

## **Deadline for the Submission of Amendments**

- 2.23 An earlier submission deadline for White Paper amendments has also been trialled with the revised deadline being 10am on the day prior to Council rather than 24 hours in advance of the council meeting. This trial has worked well and has enabled Group Whips sight of amendments a number of hours in advance of the pre Council whips meeting.
- 2.24 Officers understand that all Groups remain supportive of this change.

## **3 Corporate Considerations**

### **3.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 3.1.1 Consultation and engagement has taken place with the Leader of Council, with each opposition Group Leader and with group whips.

### **3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 3.2.1 There are no implications for this report.

### **3.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

- 3.3.1 All amendments are in line with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance, particularly with regard to the principles of focussing on the Council's purpose and community needs; having clear responsibilities and arrangements for accountability; and taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management.

3.3.2 The introduction of items around Health and Wellbeing Board and devolution enable full Council to deliberate these aspects of the City's wider priorities.

### **3.4 Resources and value for money**

3.4.1 There is no resource or value for money issues arising from this report.

### **3.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

3.5.1 The amendments proposed are in line with legislation.

### **3.6 Risk Management**

3.6.1 There are no implications for risk management arising from this report this report.

## **4 Conclusions**

4.1 There has, with the exception of the Community Committee report arrangements, been broad agreement to the changes that were proposed by this committee in July.

4.2 However in recognition of the fact that the new arrangements have not yet been 'tested' on an occasion where Honorary Aldermen are being appointed, and that concerns from opposition groups remain concerning Community Committee business, it is proposed that the trial period be extended until the end of the Municipal Year, with a report on the final proposals being presented to the May 2016 meeting of this committee with a view to recommendations being made to the 2016 Annual Meeting of Council.

4.3 It is felt that this additional period of time will enable a more complete test of the new arrangements prior to formal adoption.

## **5 Recommendations**

5.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to;

5.1.2 Approve an extension of the trial period to allow for further consideration of the arrangements during the remainder of the municipal year.

5.1.3 Request a further report to the May 2016 meeting of this committee in order for recommendations to be made on the adoption of revised Council Procedure Rules to the May 2016 Annual Council meeting.

## **6 Background documents<sup>2</sup>**

6.1 None

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<sup>2</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.