



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Member Management Committee

Date: 31st October 2006

Subject: Annual Schedule of Meeting Arrangements

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

Member Management Committee have requested a report as to how they could be involved in approval of meeting dates for the municipal year.

This report details current processes in agreeing the schedule and seeks to identify the necessary consultations and influences which have to be taken account of in the earlier part of the process.

The report proposes that the schedule be reported to Whips for approval in advance of the Annual Council meeting.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To respond to the Committee's request of 29th June 2006 that a report be brought to a future meeting setting out arrangements that would allow Member Management to consider dates for Committees, Boards and Panels for the Municipal Year.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The schedule of meetings for the year is currently prepared through a number of processes over a period of approximately six months.
- 2.2 An initial report is prepared for Corporate Management Team on proposed meeting dates for full Council for the forthcoming year. This initial list is based on the previous year's pattern, adjusted as necessary to take account of public holidays, school holidays, Jewish religious festivals, party conferences, legal requirements as to when business must be transacted and any other relevant or influencing factors which are identified.
- 2.3 The report is amended to take account of any observations by CMT and is then forwarded to Whips for consideration. In 2006 a report was put to Whips in January when consideration was deferred and a further report was considered in February when dates for submission to the Annual meeting were agreed.
- 2.4 The agreed dates are then checked against the diary of the Lord Mayor elect as Chair of the meetings and are reported for information to Cabinet.
- 2.5 The second stage in the process is the submission of a report to Corporate Management Team on proposed Executive Board meetings for the year. This report shows the relationship of the Board dates to those for Council and explains constraints which have caused given dates to be chosen. In 2006 CMT gave consideration to this report in February.
- 2.6 The report, amended as necessary by CMT, is then forwarded to Leader Management Team for approval of the Leaders as the alternating chairs of the Board. In 2006 Leader Management Team received this report in March and approved it with minor amendments.
- 2.7 The fixed dates for Executive Board and the agreed dates for Council are then notified to all members. In 2006 this letter was sent on 31st March.
- 2.8 It is only following agreement to Council and Executive Board dates as the primary framework that the arrangement for all other meetings can be progressed.
- 2.9 In relation to Scrutiny Boards a schedule of proposed dates based on those from the previous year is used as a first draft for the discussion of dates with Scrutiny Chairs. Discussions with Scrutiny Chairs are undertaken within a tight timescale dictated by the date on which Whips' nomination of Chairs is known and the beginning of the new municipal year, sometimes less than a week. Within that time the availability of the various Chairs has to be reconciled within the generally agreed pattern for the meetings. If individual Chairs require proposed dates to be shared with members on their Boards then best efforts are made to achieve this within the very limited time available. Over and above the agreed schedule of meetings, rarely finalised before the new municipal year commences, there will be needs during the year for additional enquiry and Call In meetings which by their nature are best arranged in consultation with the Chair and Board members as appropriate.

- 2.10 The manner in which dates are set for Regulatory and Area Committees are similar to Scrutiny Boards. More rigidity tends to apply to the dates for Plans Panels to retain the generally fixed patterns of rotation between the three. Licensing meetings frequently need to be called additional to those scheduled in response to demands.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Compliance with the Committee's wish to be involved in the consideration of the schedule of meeting dates will require a balance to be struck between the complexities embedded in current processes, including the rights of the Chair in respect of meeting arrangements, the very limited time available at the end of the process and the Committee's wish to have sight of proposals sufficiently early to influence them if necessary.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 It is clearly in the interests of good governance that the Council has clear arrangements, accessible at the earliest possible time, in relation to the full range of its meetings.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 There will be some additional work associated with compliance with the request.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Time constraints in relation to current processes will require to be managed to maximum efficiency to allow that proposed arrangements may be brought before members sufficiently early and sufficiently complete for their consideration to have value.
- 6.2 As Whips already meet at 5.00 pm on the day prior to the Annual meeting it may be most effective to utilise that meeting for the purpose of commenting upon a draft schedule circulated in advance of that meeting. This could be regarded as the exercise of Whips' powers in relation to political arrangements and would avoid the need to formally change Member Management Committee's terms of reference. It will still need to be acknowledged however, that the Chair of any Committee is able to arrange meetings in order that reaction to unforeseen circumstances in relation to meeting arrangements can be prompt and efficient.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 That the draft schedule of meeting arrangements be circulated to Whips in advance of their pre-meeting for Annual Council for their approval at that meeting.