



Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)

General Purposes Committee

Date: 8th September 2009

Subject: Management of White Paper Motions

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

Concern has been expressed at Whips' meetings at the absence of any control in relation to White Paper motions not for debate in Council.

Within the context of the rationale behind the current Procedure Rules, this report proposes the introduction of an additional 24 hour period to the process for management of White Papers to allow for the withdrawal of motions should the proposer wish to do so following advice from their Group Whip.

Whips have agreed that they wish to pursue this proposal, a revised version of Council Procedure Rule 12.1 is attached to this report for consideration by the General Purposes Committee for recommendation to Council.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To present the current processes for the management of White Paper motions, to identify problems associated with the processes and to present proposals for improvement.

2.0 Background Information – Current Processes

- 2.1 Council Procedure Rules currently provide that, in relation to ordinary Council meetings, White Paper motions will be submitted by no later than 10.00 am on the day of agenda despatch.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 The proposers of the motions not for debate are in most circumstances the only members aware of that designation prior to the circulation of the agenda. In the vast majority of cases White Papers are submitted at the last minute. The process of identifying the four which are eligible for debate, the designation of those not for debate, signing of the Summons and agenda despatch has to be achieved within a very short space of time. Added to which there is no opportunity for political group oversight of the process.
- 3.2 It is proposed that an additional 24 hour period of time be introduced to allow for individual groups to have opportunity for review.
- 3.3 Therefore it is suggested that Council Procedure Rules be amended to provide for a last time for submission of White Papers at 10.00 am on the day before despatch of the agenda.
- 3.4 The 24 hours thus gained could be used to introduce a new provision allowing for the withdrawal of any motion within that 24 hour period. This would allow for:-
- initial ordering and categorisation of all motions received;
 - circulation to all Group Whips following that process;
 - the potential for the relevant Group Whip to secure the withdrawal of any given motion up to the cut off time of 10.00 am on the day of agenda despatch; and
 - any necessary re-ordering and/or re-categorisation of motions.
- 3.5 A proposed revision to the relevant Procedure Rule to secure this outcome is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. Whips have agreed that they wish to pursue this change and the General Purposes Committee is requested to recommend the change for approval of full Council.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 General Purposes Committee is invited to consider whether the Procedure Rule revision, as attached to this report, should be recommended to Council.

Background Documents

Council Procedure Rules