

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Report to General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

**Subject: Review of Council Meetings**

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**

The annual meeting of Council in May 2012 adopted new arrangements for the operation of Ordinary Council meetings, in particular to allow for greater opportunities for Council to engage in activities linked to Community Leadership and for holding the Executive to account. These new arrangements were in place for the meetings of Council in July and September 2012.

Following each of these meetings, Whips from all political groups met to review the new arrangements and to address areas for improvement that have emerged.

The consensus amongst Whips is that the new arrangements have worked well, and, that the opportunity to further refine the arrangements in July and September has been valuable. However it is acknowledged that the agreed arrangements now need to be fully documented into Council Procedure Rules. This report presents Council Procedure Rules, amended to reflect the agreements that have been reached, for this Committee to consider and recommend to full Council for approval.

**Recommendations**

General Purposes Committee is asked to;

- a) consider the proposed refinements to Council day contained in this report;
- b) note the agreements reached by Whips regarding the administration of aspects of Council day;
- c) recommend that full Council approve the Council Procedure Rules as attached at Appendix 1.
- d) further review the success of the revised arrangements prior to the new Municipal Year.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 Group Leaders and Whips earlier in the year discussed the scope for modernising the operation of the Full Council Meeting, in particular to allow for greater opportunities for Council to engage in activities linked to Community Leadership and holding the Executive to account, and a number of proposals were approved at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2012.
- 1.2 Following the introduction of the new arrangements at the Council meeting in July, group whips have met to review the new arrangements and to address any areas of concerns; this report contains proposals arising from discussions that have taken place. General Purposes Committee is asked to recommend to Full Council approval of the Council Procedure Rules attached at Appendix 1.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Group Leaders and Whips discussed the scope for modernising the operation of the Full Council Meeting on the lead up to the Annual Meeting in May 2012, in particular to allow for greater opportunities for Council to engage in activities linked to Community Leadership and holding the Executive to account. At the Annual meeting it was agreed that ;
  - Deputations to be retained in the present format but be reduced by one to four
  - That there be two free standing State of the City Meetings per municipal year
  - The order of Council business be altered to allow for the receipt of recommendations from the Executive Board and committees immediately after the item receiving reports from Statutory Officers
  - The period of Question Time be retained without amendment
  - The receipt of minutes be retained with minutes from joint committees/authorities and the Leeds Initiative also presented to full Council.
  - A new item 'Members' Community Concerns' be introduced;
  - Restrict the number of White Paper Motions to two (with each being time limited) with the first being reserved to the opposition
  - The viability of live streaming of the proceedings of Council be explored with a further report to Executive Board
- 2.2 Following the Council meeting in July some refinements to the arrangements were agreed by Council in September as follows;
  - the introduction of a third White Paper (reserved to the Liberal Democrat, Morley Borough Independents and Green Groups on a rota to be agreed between those groups)
  - arrangements to allow for comments on minutes other than those of Executive Board
  - Some variations to Council business timings

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Following the Council meeting in September a further meeting of Whips<sup>1</sup> from all political groups took place. Again there was broad consensus that the new arrangements had worked well, however the following final refinements emerged from those discussions;

#### **Communications**

Where a statement is being made at the commencement of Council this should be time limited to three minutes, unless (in exceptional circumstances) there is prior whips agreement to extend due to the nature of the issue.

#### **White Papers**

That the Conservative Group to have the first White Paper at each Council meeting<sup>2</sup>.

Time limits to be adjusted to allow for both the mover of a White Paper motion and the mover of an amendment to have the same speaking time of 4 minutes.

- 3.2 All the changes and refinements discussed by Members are contained in the Council Procedure Rules attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Also contained in the procedures are proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules relating to Deputations. These proposals reflect the discussions between Whips concerning how permissions are granted for Deputations. The attached Procedures therefore contained amendments to Rule 10 which provide for;
- Earlier notification of a request to bring a deputation
  - Details of the proposed deputation speech to accompany the permission request.
  - Deputations to be relevant to some matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the City of Leeds.
  - Deputations which relate solely to the interests of an individual or company, or which present, or may appear to present unsubstantiated allegations or claims in respect of an individual, group of individuals, a company or any other body, or are in any way vexatious, to not be received.
- 3.4 Additionally the City Solicitor has reviewed the Council Procedure Rules and minor amendments are proposed to aid clarification. Principally these relate to provisions for
- Winding Up of Business at Rule 4 – these have been reworded for clarification;
  - Clarification of the period of days quoted in Rule 5 (d) (by way of footnote);
  - Clarification of Quorum arrangements at Rule 8.1 – (again by way of footnote);

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<sup>1</sup> Or where the Whip was absent, a deputy whip.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the new arrangements all White Paper motions will be debated by the meeting

- Clarification as to what Rule 12.4 (d) applies to;
  - Clarification of permitted speaking time at rule 14.1 (m) for a Member speaking at the resumption of an adjourned debate;
  - Clarification of the ruling of the Lord Mayor at Rule 14.9 by adding the words 'and is final';
  - Correction of various minor grammatical errors.
- 3.5 Members are asked to consider the proposed refinements outlined in this report and recommend that full Council approve the Council Procedure Rules as set out at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 General Purposes Committee is also asked to further review the success of the new arrangements prior to the new Municipal Year.
- 3.7 General Purposes Committee is also asked to note the following agreements reached by Whips, which, relate to how aspects of the full Council meeting are administered. These are summarised as follows;-

### **Deputations**

As part of review of Area Management explore promotion and the use of existing deputation routes through Area Committees rather than local issues automatically being referred to full Council.

### **Question Time**

That the question being verbally put to the meeting be reintroduced (as opposed to questions being put by reference to the question number on the order paper).

### **Minutes**

Timings (re the time split between Executive Board and other committees/joint committees etc) to continue until the next Annual Meeting where, at the request of the Conservative Group, the timings/business dealt with will be reviewed.

### **White Papers**

That Whips facilitate the order of speakers being rotated between the groups and that where a member, of a different political group to that proposing the motion, seconds that motion, that member may speak.

### **Communications**

Where a statement is being made at the commencement of Council this, wherever possible should be communicated to Whips in advance.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.2 Whips from across all political groups have been consulted on these proposed alterations to the format of full Council meetings.

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

4.3.1 An initial consideration of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening form indicates that there are no issues raised by the review of the operation of Full Council.

### **4.4 Council Policies and City Priorities**

4.4.1 The Council's Business Plan 2011 – 2015 sets out the Council's priorities in delivering services to the public over that period. Particularly the priorities and performance measures for Corporate Directorate require that we "Ensure there are good rules and procedures to govern the council's business".

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

4.5.1 These proposed amendments need to be made by Full Council.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 There are no corporate risks arising from this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The proposals contained within this report seek to further embed democratic accountability within the Council's governance arrangements and build upon the arrangements approved at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2012, and refined in September.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to;

- a) consider the proposed refinements to Council day contained in this report;
- b) note the agreements reached by Whips regarding the administration of aspects of Council day;
- c) recommend that full Council approve the Council Procedure Rules as attached at Appendix 1;
- d) further review the success of the revised arrangements prior to the new Municipal Year.

## **7 Background documents<sup>3</sup>**

7.1 None

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<sup>3</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.