

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Consultation on Governance Issues

1. Summary

- 1.1 The new council leadership want policy and scrutiny committees to have the opportunity to debate and make recommendations on matters requiring an executive decision before a final decision is taken. The report annexes a report which the Executive are due to consider and asks for Members' views which will be fed back to the Executive.
- 1.2 This report also asks Members whether to consider further changes to the Council Procedure Rules.

2. Executive Decision Making

- 2.1 The Executive will be considering a report at their meeting on 30th July 2015 proposing options to be consulted on for implementing this new system. Because of the timing of the meetings this Committee and the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee are being consulted prior to the Executive. It is then proposed that there will be a further period of consultation with a view to reporting back to the Executive in August. This will allow any new working arrangements which do not require constitutional change to be implemented as speedily as practicable. The proposed Executive report appears at Annex A to this report.

3. Council Procedure Rules

- 3.1 Council adopted new Procedure Rules at its meeting in October 2014. It was agreed that they should be implemented following the Annual Meeting in the new Municipal Year and will therefore apply from the July Council meeting.

- 3.2 The revised rules had been consulted upon and debated at some length by the political groups and were recommended to Council by Audit and Governance Committee. In the main there was cross party support for their adoption. The rules were approved without any amendment being proposed at Council. That being said one area which did give rise to considerable discussion was the removal of the opportunity to ask Executive Members written questions on notice in respect of matters within their portfolio responsibility. Those questions invariably received a written answer after the meeting. Some Members saw the formal public minuting of these responses to be of value. The new rules instead provide for a question time period without prior notice being given of the questions.
- 3.3 This Committee is now being asked whether:
- There is any wish to revisit the issue of written questions to meetings within the Council Procedure Rules; or whether
 - There is an alternative system which Members would like to explore such as having a webpage on which questions from Members to the Executive could be formally recorded; or whether
 - Members are happy with an informal system whereby they raise issues directly with Executive Members and seek to publicise responses as appropriate.
- 3.4 The new Rules still provide for the Leader to present a written report at each Council. He now has five minutes to do so and may be questioned for a further fifteen minutes. At each meeting an Executive Member will also submit a written report to be formally moved without discussion and on which he or she may be questioned for up to ten minutes. These opportunities are in addition to the fifteen minute provision for general questions to Executive Members.
- 3.5 To reflect the new joint administration and to contribute to scrutiny of the Executive, Members are asked to consider whether there should be provision for a report from the Deputy Leader and an opportunity for questions to be asked on his report. There are three options on how a report could be tabled:

- Formally moving the report but not taking questions on the report.
- Taking questions on the report within the existing time allocated for questions e.g. reducing one of the three existing question slots.
- Taking questions on the report by extending the overall time allocated for questions.

Members' views are invited on this matter.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 This report is being presented to this Committee by way of consultation. The Executive, Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee, political groups and the Independent Members are being consulted on the proposals in respect of executive decision making.

5. Council Plan

- 5.1 Effective and inclusive decision making will assist in achieving all Council Plan priorities

6. Implications

- 6.1 The implications of changing executive decision making arrangements are set out in the annexed report. Changing the Council Procedure rules would be a constitutional change requiring Council approval. There are no other implications.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are requested:

- a) to consider this report and make comments in respect of the proposed executive decision making arrangements for consideration by the Executive.

Reason

To enable revised decision making arrangements to be put in place

- b) to indicate whether there is a wish to revisit the issue of written questions and to ask the Monitoring Officer to bring forward firm proposals in line with the Committee's recommendations

- c) to indicate whether they would support the introduction of a Deputy Leader's report to Council and if so ask the Monitoring Officer to bring forward proposals for amendments to the Procedure Rules reflecting the Committee's deliberations.

Reason

To ensure that the Council meeting continues to be a forum for constructive challenge and debate.

Author and Chief Officer responsible for the report:

Andy Docherty
Assistant Director
Tel No. 01904 551004

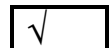
Report Approved



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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A - Proposed report to the Executive