

Report of the Monitoring Officer

Group Leaders' Meetings

Summary

1. This report responds to Members' requests for a report on the terms of reference of the Group leaders' meeting and its role in local democracy.

Background

2. Meetings of Group leaders are a routine and familiar part of the informal operation of the vast majority if not all local authorities. In York, as with many authorities the meeting operates without formal terms of reference since it sits outside of formal decision making structures. The purpose of these meetings may, however, be summarised as being predominantly:
 - To facilitate appropriate working relationships between the political groups
 - To provide a forum for Officers to consult on matters relating to the administration of the Council's business
 - To provide an environment for individual Group Leaders to raise issues with all the other Leaders
 - To provide briefings to Group Leaders on matters of particular relevance prior to decisions being taken
 - To allow for initial joint consultative briefings on matters affecting the way the Council is run
3. The meetings therefore provide an opportunity for Group leaders to get together to discuss matters of common interest or concern, they support the effective operation of decision making, they provide an opportunity for tensions to be raised and for common ground to be identified. The Local Government Association identifies these meetings as good practice within its publication: "**No**

overall control - Learning further lessons from councils without a majority administration”

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/No+overall+control/0d2fa381-187e-4dac-9d2f-7848d5b501ae>

4. Members will also recall that one of the recommendations from the 2014 Local Government Association Peer Review was that the Council should:

“Instigate more-regular meetings between Group Leaders where, amongst other issues, progress on some "non-political" issues for the City could be made in a collegiate way.”

5. In York, historically a key focus of the meeting was to discuss the administrative arrangements for meetings of Full Council. This ensured that all Groups were aware of how the meeting was intended to run and collective views could be provided to the Lord Mayor to assist the effective management of the meeting. Although other matters were discussed meetings were timed around the Council meetings. Following the 2014 Peer review more regular Group Leaders’ meetings were introduced and a pattern of monthly meetings has now been established. The arrangements for the Council meeting continue to be a standard item for discussion but other matters considered have included:
 - Briefings on particular issues – e.g. the December floods, the Syrian Refugees, forthcoming inspections etc;
 - Advice to Officers on Issues relating to the Civic life of the City e.g. use of the Council crest, awarding Civic honours etc where cross party consensus is desirable;
 - Arrangements for Member Support;
 - The allocation of places on outside bodies.

Council Plan

6. Group leaders’ meetings contribute to the creation and maintenance of an appropriate political culture within the Council

which underpins good governance and the delivery of the council's priorities.

Implications

7. There are no implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

8. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

9. Members are recommended to note this report.

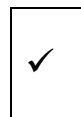
Reason: To ensure that Members are aware of the terms of reference of the Group Leaders' meetings as requested.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



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Specialist Implications Officers

Not applicable

Wards Affected: Not applicable

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

None