

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

8 JANUARY 2009

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

COUNCIL DECISION

Corporate Management and Finance – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Laing

ANNUAL MEETING

1. Summary

This report requests Cabinet to consider recommendations from the Members' Advisory Panel relating to the format and protocol of future Annual Council meetings.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:-

1. agrees the adoption of the following format for future Annual Meetings:-

- Council to meet and elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (no ceremony) and undertake all other necessary business required. Guests would receive an invitation, directing them to an alternative room, for refreshments, at a time estimated for the conclusion of that business.
- At the conclusion of the business part of the Annual Meeting a short Break would be taken, during which, guests would be invited into the meeting room and a ceremony would take place, to mark the election and installation of the new Mayor.
- At the conclusion of the ceremony the Mayor would invite guests and members to attend the post meeting civic lunch; and that

2. the Members' Advisory Panel receives a further report regarding the outcome of using the new format at the 2009 Annual Meeting.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Following notification that there was uncertainty surrounding the availability of the Billingham Forum Theatre for 2009, the Members Advisory Panel began consideration of alternative venues. As part of those considerations the Panel also looked at the format of the meeting and identified an alternative. It was felt that the current format had the potential for creating a negative impression of the day, which the proposed new format would minimise.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

AGENDA ITEM

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8 JANUARY 2009

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MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION/ COUNCIL DECISION

ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY

This report requests that Cabinet considers recommendations from the Members' Advisory Panel relating to the format and protocol of future Annual Council meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:-

1. agrees the adoption of the following format for future Annual Meetings:-

- Council to meet and elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (no ceremony) and undertake all other necessary business required. Guests would receive an invitation, directing them to an alternative room, for refreshments, at a time estimated for the conclusion of that business.
- At the conclusion of the business part of the Annual Meeting a short Break would be taken, during which, guests would be invited into the meeting room and a ceremony would take place, to mark the election and installation of the new Mayor.
- At the conclusion of the ceremony the Mayor would invite guests and members to attend the post meeting civic lunch; and that

2. the Members' Advisory Panel receives a further report regarding the outcome of using the new format at the 2009 Annual Meeting.

DETAIL

1. Following notification that, due to planned refurbishment, the Billingham Forum Theatre may not be available for the Annual meeting 2009, the Members' Advisory Panel began consideration of an alternative venue.
2. The Panel identified a number of possible venues but did not reach a consensus. Subsequently the Panel learned that the Theatre would be available for 2009, but was unlikely to be available the following year. In view of this the Panel agreed that the venue for 2009 would remain at Billingham Forum Theatre, but further consideration would be given to a venue for 2010 at future Panel meetings.
3. As part of its consideration of an alternative venue the Panel took the opportunity to consider alternative formats for the meeting. The Panel recognised the two distinct aspects of the Annual Meeting:-

- Business aspect – primarily the election of the Mayor, Leader, Cabinet, Committees, Chairs, Vice Chairs and the,
- Ceremonial aspect – marking the election of the new Mayor and the significance of this to the Member concerned, his/her family and friends, the Council and residents of the Borough.

4. The Panel felt that, whilst appropriate for the ceremonial aspect of the meeting, and subsequent reception, the Billingham Forum Theatre’s physical characteristics did not allow a set up conducive to dealing with Council business. The positioning of the Mayor, on the stage, means he or she is quite remote from the body of the meeting and vision from the stage into the auditorium is poor. This hampers the management of the meeting, particularly when unexpected situations arise. Members will be aware that the Annual Meeting presents the possibility of a substantial number of complicated voting situations. Given this, there is considerable potential for confusion and/or a protracted/problematic meeting. This could create a negative impression of the day for the Mayor, his family and civic guests.
5. The view was taken that the format of the meeting could be organised such that it would reduce the chances of the potential problems detailed above occurring, and the following options were identified and considered:-

OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
Current format Election of Mayor and ceremony immediately followed by all other business.	Mayoral Installation; followed by a break for hospitality (guests invited). Business aspects of meeting to continue (same day) with no guests invited.	Mayoral Installation; followed by Business aspects of meeting (no guests invited). Civic ceremony/hospitality held for invited guests same or alternative day.	Mayoral Installation; followed by a break for hospitality (guests invited). Business aspects of meeting continue next day (no guests invited)

6. The Panel discussed the options and supported a version of option 3: -
- Council to meet and elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (no ceremony) and undertake all other necessary business required. Guests would receive an invitation, directing them to an alternative room, for refreshments, at a time estimated for the conclusion of that business. Clearly this is a public meeting and as such guests would still have the option of attending the meeting if they wished.
 - At the conclusion of the business part of the Annual Meeting there would be a short break, during which, guests would be invited into the meeting room and a ceremony would take place, to mark the election and installation of the new Mayor.
 - At the conclusion of the ceremony the Mayor would invite guests and members to attend the post meeting civic lunch.
7. It was considered that this new format would assist the smooth running of the Annual Meeting and it was suggested that it be adopted for future Meetings.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. None, the proposed new format would not attract additional costs to those already budgeted for.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The proposed new format does not effect any of the legal considerations surrounding the Annual Meeting.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. This issue is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

11. None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment .

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

13. Members Advisory Panel and Corporate Management Team

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Background Papers

Minutes of relevant Members' Advisory Panel

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not Ward Specific

Property

None