

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 JANUARY 2012

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT**

COUNCIL MEETINGS - CABINET UPDATES, MEMBER QUESTIONS/MOTIONS

SUMMARY

To consider recommendations from the Members' Advisory Panel associated with the consideration of Cabinet Updates at Council and the monitoring of motions adopted by Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council agree that

1. The Council Questions procedure be used as the appropriate mechanism to facilitate questions of Cabinet Members at Council meetings.
2. Any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting should an immediate answer be required; or alternatively be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question on notice.
3. The introduction of Cabinet updates at Council meetings commences from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.
4. The Head of Democratic Services be requested to implement an appropriate mechanism to monitor progress made against any motion adopted by full Council.

DETAILS

1. Members will recall that, at its meeting held on 19 October 2011, Council approved a number of recommendations put forward by the Members' Advisory Panel relating to arrangements for Ordinary meetings of Council. The decisions included:
 - ceasing to present minutes.
 - the introduction of reports as a means for Cabinet, Committees etc to make recommendations to Council.
 - the introduction of a synopsis of Member Policy Updates
 - an increase in the required notice period for public questions and member questions and motions.
2. The Members Advisory Panel had also formulated a recommendation that provided that the Council agenda would include an opportunity for a Cabinet Member(s) to update Council on matters within their portfolio, either identified by themselves, or requested by other members and the number of updates be restricted to one or two per meeting with a view to 'sharing out' the number of Executive updates throughout the year. The Panel had indicated that it would be undertaking further consideration of this matter in terms of member feedback in response to a Cabinet Member Update.

3. The Panel met on 25 November 2011 (**Minute attached at Appendix**) and consideration was given to how other authorities within the region facilitated member questions in response to Cabinet updates provided at full Council. It was reported that, from analysis of the approach adopted by other authorities who allowed Cabinet updates at Council, it was clear that such updates were not intended to displace the facility allowed for more formal Member Questions to be submitted on notice.
4. The Panel agreed with this approach and felt that that any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting, should an immediate answer be required; or, alternatively, be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question, on notice. The Panel felt it was important for any update to be presented in such a way that all members could understand any related bodies or organisations referred to in the update, and that the use of any acronyms be accompanied by an explanation. This would reduce the need for members to ask questions for clarification.
5. The Panel was also of the view that given that the recent changes introduced regards full Council meetings were in the early stages of implementation, that the introduction of Cabinet updates should only commence from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and rather than being delivered on a rolling programme, should in fact only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.
6. A summary of the use of the Member Questions procedure since the period last reviewed was also submitted. The Panel recognised the limitations for debate contained within the facility to submit Member Questions and the greater opportunities that were available for all members to participate in debate through the submission of member motions on notice. It was however indicated that there was no current procedure in place to keep members informed of any progress made following any action agreed by Council as a direct result of a member motion. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the implementation of such a mechanism would be investigated.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no major financial implications associated with this report.
8. The Council's current procedures with regard to Member Questions and Motions are set out in the Council's Constitution.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9. In view of the nature of the proposals an assessment is not necessary.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

10. The information presented within the report is relevant to both member and public experience of ordinary Council meetings, and therefore contributes towards the Stronger Communities element of the Community Strategy,.

CONSULTATION

11. Cabinet, at its meeting held on 16th December 2010 (Min 121/10 refers), considered future options regarding a review of Council meetings and resolved that these matters be referred to the Members Advisory Panel for consideration. MAP's views were obtained on the 30th September 2011 and decisions made with regard to the format of Council meetings by Council on the 19th October 2011. The further views of MAP are invited as part of the on-going consultation requested in relation to the two specific issues identified in this report.

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Background Papers:

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not Ward Specific

Property Implications:

None

APPENDIX

Minute Number:- MAP 10/11

Title:- Council Meetings – Cabinet Updates, Member Questions/Motions

Minute Details:-

Further to the last meeting consideration was given to how other authorities within the region facilitated member questions in response to Cabinet updates provided at full Council. It was reported that, from analysis of the approach adopted by other authorities who allowed Cabinet updates at Council, it was clear that such updates were not intended to displace the facility allowed for more formal Member Questions to be submitted on notice.

It was therefore proposed that any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting should an immediate answer be required; or alternatively be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question on notice. It was noted that it would be imperative for any update to be presented in such a way that all members could understand any related bodies or organisations referred to in the update, and that the use of any acronyms be accompanied by an explanation.

The Panel were also of the view that given that the recent changes introduced regards full Council meetings were in the early stages of implementation, that the introduction of Cabinet updates should only commence from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and rather than being delivered on a rolling programme, should in fact only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.

A summary of the use of the Member Questions procedure since the period last reviewed was also submitted. Members recognised the limitations for debate contained within the facility to submit Member Questions and the greater opportunities that were available for all members to participate in debate through the submission of member motions on notice. It was however indicated that there was no current procedure in place to keep members informed of any progress made following any action agreed by Council as a direct result of a member motion. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the implementation of such a mechanism would be investigated.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. The Council Questions procedure be used as the appropriate mechanism to facilitate questions of Cabinet Members at Council meetings.**
- 2. Any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting should an immediate answer be required; or alternatively be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question on notice.**
- 3. The introduction of Cabinet updates at Council meetings commences from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.**
- 4. The Head of Democratic Services be requested to implement an appropriate mechanism to monitor progress made against any motion adopted by full Council.**