

All Members

Our Ref: A009

Your Ref:

Please ask for: Ken Lee

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Date: 20 May 2005

Dear Councillor,

Re-inventing the Council Meeting

You will recall that a report, first put before the Council meeting in January, has been prepared on the changes that could be made to the format of the Council Meeting. These were aimed at making the Council meetings more inclusive, ensuring that members are allowed an opportunity to ask questions on decisions and also to give the public an opportunity to ask questions.

This matter was mentioned at a recent council meeting. The Mayor, following a number of discussions between members, has indicated that he accepts the additional item should be considered as at the council meeting to be held on 26th May 2005 as a matter of urgency, in accordance with section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972(as amended).

I enclose for your attention the relevant papers.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	COUNCIL	26 MAY 2005	10

RE-INVENTING THE FULL COUNCIL

Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

Last year, the Community Outlook forum accepted a number of recommendations from a task & finish group set up to look at ways of revitalising full council meetings. Those recommendations that needed council endorsement to be implemented were reported to the full council. The full council decided not to implement them, but after some minor amendments, the full council is now invited to adopt the recommendations.

Recommendation/s

1. That the full council adopt the recommendations of the task & finish group and the subsequent changes to the constitution.

Executive brief

The item falls within the following executive briefs: Leader and quality services (Councillor John Coombes), Community engagement (Councillor Paul Rigby).

Report

1. The community outlook forum meeting of October 28 2004 appointed a task & finish group, consisting of councillors Mulholland and Thompson to consider ways of using full council meetings to re-engage the community and non-executive councillors with the workings of the council.

Continued....

2. The group met on 10 November 2004 and produced recommendations. The recommendations were reported back to the forum meeting on 25 November. The forum resolved to endorse the recommendations of the task & finish group (as amended by the forum) and to request me to draft changes to the constitution to put them into effect for adoption by full council. The recommendations of the task & finish group, as amended by the community forum and subsequently, are appended to this report as appendix 1.
3. Most of the recommendations, as amended by the forum, were reported to the full council on January 19, together with the constitutional changes needed to put them into effect. The council resolved “that the scheme be referred back to the Community Outlook Community Forum for fine tuning (including consideration of the timing of meetings) for possible implementation at the earliest practical opportunity”.
4. The matter has not been considered by the Community Outlook Forum and as the changes are basically the adoption of best practice and the timing of meetings has been dealt with at a previous council meeting, it is hoped that members of the Council will now pilot the proposed changes.
5. The constitutional changes necessary to put the changes as presently drawn into effect are attached as appendix 2.
6. Members are asked to again consider the proposals for immediate implementation in the knowledge that they can be adjusted in the light of experience.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	
Legal	The council needs to reflect changes to its formal procedures in its constitution.
Community Safety	
Human Rights and Equalities	
Sustainability	
Health & Safety and Risk Management	

REPORT AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Ian Curtis	(01253) 658506	12 April 2005	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NAME OF DOCUMENT	DATE	WHERE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
None		

Attached documents

Appendix 1: Amended recommendations of the task & finish group

Appendix 2: Proposed changes to the constitution

Modified Task & Finish Group Report on Re- inventing the Full Council



Date	19 th May 2005
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Group members	Kiran Mulholland, William Thompson
Officers	Ian Curtis, Kelly Neale

1. Re-inventing the full council

NB These recommendations are shown as amended by the community outlook community forum on 25 November 2004, amendments indicated by brackets [], drafting changes made by Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Councillor K Mulholland are in brackets { }

The group had been tasked with making recommendations on ways to use the full council meeting for increasing community involvement and councillor engagement with the authority. Members considered short papers from Ken Lee (Chief Executive), Tracy Scholes (Unit Business Manager for Overview & Scrutiny) and councillors Tim Ashton, Ray Norsworthy and Barbara Pagett.

The group considered that non-executive members often felt uninvolved in council business since the modernisation agenda was implemented. There was a perception that they were unable to influence the decision-making process in a meaningful way.

The group believed that this situation could be improved by aligning the cycle of council meetings with the cycle of executive committee meetings. Council meetings would be held within the time for recovery of a decision under the call-in procedures. Any discussion of decisions taken by the executive committee would then be about matters that were still 'live' (in the sense that they could be recovered for call-in). *{NB. the proposed meeting schedule has taken this issue on board and Executive Committees and Council Meetings have now been aligned}* Members would be more informed about items that they might be considering seeking to recover for call-in.

The group agreed to recommend the following new features in council meetings (N.B. "Executive members" is used as shorthand for members of the executive committee and "non-executive members" refers to all other members):

APPENDIX 1

- **Members' question time:** A time set aside for non-executive members to ask questions of executive members. Questions would be required to be in writing and submitted by close of business [three working] days before the meeting. They should be directed to a particular executive member and be relevant to his brief, or directed to the leader. The executive member would be given at least 24 hours' notice of the question. If directed to the leader, the leader would be entitled to ask another executive member to answer the question instead. Questions would be put orally at the meeting and answered orally. The member who submitted the question would be entitled to ask one supplementary question relevant to the original question and the reply to it. Questions to be limited to, say *{five}* per council meeting plus supplementaries and allowed on a first-come first served basis.
- **Public question time:** The most meaningful forum for public participation was the community forums. Nonetheless, there was a role for public participation in council meetings, as follows. The public to be invited to submit questions in writing to executive members. These would be limited to, say, five per meeting, again on a first come, first served basis. The leader would be given at least 24 hours' notice of the question and would decide which executive member should answer the question. An executive member from a political group other than that of the leader would be entitled to decline to answer. Questions would be read out by an officer at the meeting. [Each question *{and answer}* would have a time limit of two minutes.]
- **Member champions and council representatives on outside bodies** should be given the opportunity to present an update report to the council on their area of interest or responsibility [as and when significant issues of interest require reporting]. This would not be compulsory, as there would often be nothing to report. Members could question them on their reports. [Maximum of two presentations with a time limit of five minutes per presentation.]
- **Scrutiny report:** The chairman of each community forum would be expected to present an overview of the recent activity of his forum at each council meeting. Members could question them on their reports. [Each report *{and subsequent questions}* restricted to five minutes.]
- **Member's choice debate:** At each meeting there would be a debate on a subject chosen by a non-executive member. The member would be selected at random. The subject of the debate would be in the form of a proposition drawn up by the member concerned, which would be adopted or not by the council at the end of the debate. The debate would not be subject to the normal array of closure motions, but would be subject to a time limit of 30 minutes, unless the Mayor in his discretion considered that it should be debated for longer. A member would be excluded from the "draw" for a year once he had had his debate.
- **Honorary Aldermen** should be included on the circulation list for agendas and invited to attend meetings of the council.

APPENDIX 2

- In part A of appendix 3 (Standing Orders, Council Procedure Rules), insert a new sub-paragraph 3.3.6 into rule 3 (Meeting of the Council, Ordinary Meetings) as follows:

“Deal with any questions from members of the council submitted under rule 8”

- In the same part, insert a new rule 8 as follows:

“8 Questions from members of the council

8.1 A councillor who is not a member of the executive committee may, subject to 8.2, ask a question of a member of the executive committee at an ordinary meeting of the council.

8.2 Questions may only be asked under 8.1 if:

8.2.1 The councillor who wants to ask the question has given it in writing to the unit business manager (legal & democratic services) before 4.30 p.m. on the fourth working day before the meeting and has identified the executive committee member who he wants to answer it;

8.2.2 The question is relevant to the brief held by the member who is to answer it, or is to be answered by the leader of the council;

8.2.3 The question and answer will take no longer than two minutes; and

8.2.4 At the time the question is given to the unit business manager (legal & democratic services), no more than four questions to be asked under this rule at the meeting concerned have previously been given to him

8.3 The member who is to answer the question will be given at least 24 hours’ notice of it.

8.4 The question must be answered at the meeting by the member to whom it is directed, unless:

8.4.1 The member is not present, or

8.4.2 The question is directed to the leader of the council, in either of which cases, the leader of the council may nominate another member of the executive committee.

8.5 The councillor who has asked the question may then ask one supplementary question, which must arise out of the answer given to the original question and take no longer than two minutes to ask and answer, and the member who answered the original question must answer the supplementary question.

8.6 No councillor will be permitted to ask more than one question under this rule (excluding supplementary questions under 8.5) at any meeting

- In part A of appendix 3 (Standing Orders, Council Procedure Rules), insert a new sub-paragraph 3.3.7 into rule 3 (Meeting of the Council, Ordinary Meetings) as follows:

“Deal with any written questions from members of the public submitted under rule 9”

- In the same part, insert a new rule 9 as follows:

“9 Questions from members of the public

CONTINUED....

9.1 Any resident of the council's district may submit one written question to be asked at an ordinary meeting of the council. The question will, subject to 9.2, be read out by an officer and answered by a member of the executive committee.

9.2 Questions will only be asked under 9.1 if:

9.2.1 The written request for the question to be asked has been given to the unit business manager (legal & democratic services) before 4.30 p.m. on the fourth working day before the meeting

9.2.2 The question will take no longer than two minutes to ask; and

9.2.3 At the time the question is given to the unit business manager (legal & democratic services), no more than four questions to be asked under this rule at the meeting concerned have previously been given to him

9.3 The leader of the council will be given at least 24 hours' notice of any questions to be asked under this rule.

9.4 The question must be answered at the meeting by a member of the executive committee nominated by the leader to answer it, except that a member of the executive committee who is not a member of the same political group as the leader of the council may decline to answer.

- In part A of appendix 3 (Standing Orders, Council Procedure Rules), insert a new sub-paragraph 3.3.13 into rule 3 (Meeting of the Council, Ordinary Meetings) as follows:

“Hear any report from a member champion on his area of interest or responsibility and any report from a member who represents the council on any outside body on the work of that body or any issue arising from the council's involvement with it (such reports and any subsequent questions to be limited to a maximum of two per meeting and five minutes per report)”

- In part A of appendix 3 (Standing Orders, Council Procedure Rules), insert a new sub-paragraph 3.3.14 into rule 3 (Meeting of the Council, Ordinary Meetings) as follows:

“conclude with a debate on a subject chosen by a member of the council as provided under rule 13 (a “Member's Choice Debate”)

- In the same part, insert a new rule 13 as follows:

13 Member's choice debate

13.1 The Member's Choice debate will be conducted as set out in this rule.

13.2 At the conclusion of each ordinary council meeting, following any Member's Choice Debate, a member will be chosen at random to lead the Member's Choice Debate at the next ordinary meeting.

13.3 No member of the Executive Committee and no councillor who has led a Member's Choice Debate within one year ending with the date of selection will be eligible to be chosen

13.4 The member who will lead the Member's Choice Debate must notify the unit business manager (legal & democratic services) in writing of the subject he has chosen for debate at least fourteen days before the date of the meeting at which the debate is to take place.

13.5 A member's choice debate will not take place if the member who is to lead it is not present.

13.6 A Member's Choice Debate will, subject to rule 13.6, be conducted according to rule 11 (rules of debate) as if the subject for debate were a

motion duly moved with notice under rule 9 by the member leading the debate.

13.7 The following parts of rule 11 (rules of debate) do not apply to a Member's Choice Debate

13.7.1 Rules 11.1 to 11.3

13.7.2 Rules 11.7 and 11.8

13.7.3 Rules 11.10.03 to 11.10.06

13.7.4 Rule 11.11

13.8 The Mayor will close a Member's Choice Debate by taking the vote after 30 minutes, unless he considers that more time is necessary to properly debate it