

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report puts forward proposals in connection with the development of the Council's Political Decision Making Structure for consideration by the Executive Board and, if agreed, for recommendation to full Council.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 When the new Political Decision Making Structure was agreed last May, it was seen very much as a work in progress which would need refining and further development as the new structure bedded in and began to operate over an extended period. There was recognition that in particular the Executive Board and the Area Committees, as the new elements in the structure, would require consideration and possible refinement.
- 2.2 The Review Committee's report on the agenda this evening focuses particularly on the Area Committees and makes a number of recommendations, particularly in connection with those Area Committees. This report therefore focuses primarily on the membership and operation of the Executive Board, especially in the light of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which has received assent since the new system has been in operation.
- 2.3 The Standards Committee in January considered some of the conduct issues arising from the legislation and the Corporate Director (Internal Services) provided a detailed briefing on its implications via the Member's Bulletin earlier this year. A key element of that legislation in terms of the political decision making structure is that by 2010 the Council will have to take a decision on moving to a 'stronger leadership model', specify a timetable for implementation and any transitional arrangements, and implement those changes no later than 2011. Under that model, it will remain for Full Council to appoint a leader, but that leader will have a term of office of 4 years (unless they resign, lose their seat, or receive a vote of no confidence). It will then be for the Leader each year to select his/her members of the Executive Board (not the Council as such) and allocate portfolios/responsibilities.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Taking into account the recommendations of the Review Committee, reflecting on the first year of operation of the Executive Board and acknowledging the legislation now in place, it is considered that there would be advantage in recommending to full Council that from the new municipal year in May, we move to a stronger leadership model. Thus we would move to the new model from May, with no further transitional arrangements. The new model implemented from May would involve the Council appointing the

Leader for a term of 4 years who would then appoint the members of the Executive Board and allocate responsibilities. For the avoidance of doubt, all other chairmanships/deputy chairmanships would be appointed by Council, or in the case of Area Committee Chairman/deputy chairman, by the relevant ward members within the area at the Annual Council meeting.

- 3.2 In the context of the operation of the Executive Board, it is also proposed that from the new municipal year, we move away from an Executive Board which makes decisions solely on a collective basis to one which strengthens the portfolios/responsibilities around each Executive Board member, so that they are seen to be more accountable for their areas of responsibility. Those responsibilities and delegations would need to be approved by Council at its annual meeting in May. However, they would need to tie in with the current officer delegations. It will be important to ensure that each member portfolio holder focuses on the broader strategic direction and policy issues around each portfolio, leaving the day-to-day management mechanics to the individual Heads of Service.
- 3.3 One of the Review Committee's recommendations is that there should be a standing item on the Executive Board agenda for Area Committee Chairmen to report back. If that is agreed, there is then potential to review the position of Area Committee Chairmen as members of the Executive Board. They could still be invited along to report back and discuss issues raised at the Area Committee. That would ensure the connectivity between the Executive Board and Area Committee structure was maintained; however, they would no longer be Executive Board members. If that was done the Executive Board could become a membership of 8 who, under the proposed new arrangements, would be given specific portfolios/responsibilities.
- 3.4 Whilst the allocation of portfolios would be the responsibility of the Leader under the stronger leadership model, it is suggested that the appropriate portfolios/responsibilities would be as follows, with specific portfolios attributed to both the Leader and Deputy Leader in the first instance:-
- Leader (and Chairman of the Executive Board) – Overall strategy and policy direction
 - Board Member for Service Development/Improvement & Performance Management (Deputy Leader)
 - Board Member for Environment including Parks, Open Spaces and Woodlands, Recycling, Street Scene and the new contracts.
 - Board Member for Finance and Resources
 - Board Member for Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, the Arts, Culture and Business
 - Board Member for Planning and Transportation

- Board Member for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions
- Board Member for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-being, Health and Community Safety.

3.5 The roles/responsibilities around these would need to be incorporated into the revised Constitution agreed by Annual Council. Through providing more responsibility to Executive Board members and further detailing that responsibility, it would also be possible to reduce the number of member champions at this point in time to 2: one around Risk and Business Continuity and one around E-Govt and Web development.

3.6 Other than the above, no other changes are suggested by this report for consideration and recommendation by the Executive Board to Full Council.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Along with the recommendations from the Review Committee, changes proposed in this report seek to ensure that the Council continues to recognise the changing legislative background and responds to the regulatory and operational risks posed by the legislation.

4.2 At the same time, the changes outlined aim at improving the strategic and reputational risks associated with the Council by demonstrating that the Council can continue to respond to change and learn from experiences to date.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Should Members and Council agree to the changes as outlined, the Remuneration Panel would be re-convened to reflect on the changing responsibilities resulting from the proposals. Any additional costs that result would need to be factored into the half-yearly review of the 2008/2009 budget.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is a requirement for any proposals to be mindful of the legislative framework as outlined in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The decision is not so much around if, but when the Council moves to a stronger leadership and Executive model.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that the Board **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that:-

(1) From May 2008:-

- (a) The Council moves to a stronger leadership model of governance with the Leader appointed for a period of 4 years and with the Leader taking over responsibility for member appointments to the

Executive Board. All other chairmanship/deputy chairmanship appointments to remain with full Council, with the exception of the Area Committee Chairmen, who will be appointed at Annual Council but on the basis of the votes from those members only within the wards covered by that Area Committee.

- (b) The Executive Board be changed to 8 members each with responsibility for specific portfolios around:-
- Overall strategy and policy (to rest with the Leader)
 - Service Development /Improvement and Performance Management (to rest with the Deputy Leader)
 - Environment including Parks, Open Spaces and Woodlands, Recycling, Street Scene and the new contracts.
 - Finance and Resources
 - Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, the Arts, Culture and Business
 - Planning and Transportation
 - Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions
 - Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care & Well-being, Health and Community Safety
- (c) In the light of (a) and (b) above, the Area Committee Chairmen will no longer be members of the Executive Board.
- (d) In the light of (a) and (b) above, the Member Champion roles be reduced to two to cover the areas of Risk and Business Continuity and E-Govt and Website development only.
- (2) Subject to the changes outlined in (1) above being agreed, a revised Constitution incorporating these changes is reported into Annual Council in May for consideration and approval.

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Background Papers: -

None

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