

SLWG – POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 At the meeting of the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) held on 15th November 2016, Members asked that officers draft a report for the next meeting to include:

- Further information on the different decision making models, giving an indication on quality by comparing efficiency and the cost of delivery for each model.
- Options for strengthening referral processes.
- Ideas for improving agenda management.

1.2 Members are asked to consider the information provided.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report provides Members of the SLWG with the information that they requested at the meeting held on 15th November 2016.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to consider the information provided.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 At the meeting of the SLWG on 15th November, Members asked officers to provide information on a number of areas.

4.2 Quality of Decision Making Models.

4.2.1 The quality of potential decision making models can be considered in terms of both efficiency and the cost of delivery of the model. In progressing this, officers have considered statistics for the current traditional committee structure for a) how often decisions go against officers recommendations, b) how often referrals go up to another committee and the decision is changed, c) how many times there are divisions where officers recommendations are not agreed, and d) how many successful challenges there have been to committee decisions (judicial reviews etc.)

	No of reports where officer recommendation is not agreed	No of reports referred up to another committee and decision is changed	No of reports where there is division of members and officer recommendation is not agreed	No of successful challenges to committee decisions
EDI	1	0	0	0
Community Services	2	0	0	0
Policy & Resources	0	0	0	0

Given that the different decision making models being considered by the SLWG relates at this time only to the central committee structure no analysis of decisions made by Area Committees has been carried out.

4.2.2 The second variable which should be considered in terms of the quality of decision making models relates to cost, and this can really only be measured by the frequency/number of meetings linked to the cost of delivery of the service. A comparison is provided below between the current political management framework and the options which are currently under consideration. Diagrams showing the detail of each model are attached as Appendices 1 – 3.

Committee model	Central meetings	Area meetings	Total
Current Traditional model	47 Ordinary meetings – not including Special or Hearings	44 Area Committees 16 Area CPG meetings	107
Updated Traditional model	39 Ordinary meetings	Area Committees to be confirmed Area CPG meetings to be confirmed	39 plus Area to be confirmed
Cabinet/Executive Model	43 Ordinary meetings	Area Committees to be confirmed Area CPG meetings to be confirmed	43 plus Area to be confirmed

In the current political management framework there are 107 meeting cycles to be supported /administered each year (47 central meetings and 60 at the areas – this includes the current support for Area Community Planning). The staff resource available to cover this number of meetings is 14.9 full time equivalent. No account has been made of extra or special meetings of committees, or of the number of LRBs and hearings etc. which derive from the PPSL committee since these are difficult to predict and quantify on a regular basis, and since this is likely to continue to be the case in whatever the decision making process is in the new council. Once Governance and Law completes its service choices process it is likely that the staff resource available to support committee processes will reduce by 5.6 fte to 9.3 full time equivalents, which is a 38% reduction. The decision making model adopted by the new council will have to be capable of being supported by this significantly reduced service resource.

4.2.3 Members discussed the need for all members of the council to have the opportunity to be included in decision making processes at all levels, and points were made about previous experiences whereby if an elected member was not involved with the work of the executive committee their opportunity to take part in strategic discussion and decision making was very limited. Members further

noted that generally the current traditional committee model offers wider opportunity for such strategic work for all members given the membership of EDI and Community Services each being 16 members.

4.2.4 In an effort to resolve such concerns it is suggested that in the event of the SLWG recommending an executive/cabinet type model, the structure would then include an opposition led scrutiny committee which would hold the executive/cabinet to account over their decisions.

4.3 Strengthening Referral Processes.

4.3.1 Members were of the view that the current referral process should be strengthened to ensure that whenever possible decisions are made at the first committee at which a report is considered, and that the need for onward referral is reduced. Two options for change to the Scheme of Delegation which can be considered include the potential that there would be no need for referral of decisions made by any committee to a second committee if the first committee is unanimous in their agreement of an officers recommendation in a report on a matter within the Terms of Reference for that committee. Additionally, a mechanism can be built into the Constitution to provide that if a committee makes a decision which is unanimous but is not in agreement with the recommendation of an officer that decision could be made without referral to a further committee, subject to clarity that there are no significant implications for service delivery, policy or budget; if there were any such implications the report would need to come back for further consideration, and ultimately any matter in this category is likely to have to be referred upwards, potentially to full council.

4.3.2 In respect of the statistical information provided at 4.2.1 above, if the suggested changes to the referral process were implemented the numbers of reports which would have been referred to another committee would have been as follows:

	No of reports referred onwards in current process	No of report's which would have been agreed without need for referral	No of reports with knock on implications which would have required further consideration	No of reports which would have required referral even if changes made to Constitution
EDI (10/4/14 – 10/11/16)	16	13	3	3
Community Services (8/5/14 – 21/11/16)	11	9	2	2
Policy and Resources	29	16	9	9

4.4 Improving Agenda Management.

4.4.1 Members were keen to consider options for managing agendas and ensuring efficient decision making at meetings. Committee reports can be for the purpose of providing information upon which decision is required; for the purpose of providing information to support members exercise their scrutiny role and assess progress on strategic issues, for the purpose of sharing information which is simply for information/noting, or for the purpose of considering consultations to which a committee may wish to make a response.

4.4.2 The report considered by the SLWG in November included detail on the number of reports which have been tabled at service committees for noting, which is as follows:

Committee	No of Reports (excl minutes, presentations & workplan)	Outcome - for Noting
EDI	37	18
Community Services	42	21

Approximately 50% of reports considered by these service committees are for noting and do not require a decision to be made by members, however closer analysis has established that a number of these reports were presented not simply for the purpose of providing information but to support members exercise their scrutiny role and assess progress on strategic issues.

4.4.3 Members were keen to consider agenda management changes to ensure that agendas, and meetings, are focused and effective and concentrate on business which requires to be concluded, thereby ensuring that there is clarity around decision making processes at all times by all committees. Options for such proactive agenda management include having substantive items which require decisions to be made as the first items for consideration at all meetings. Agendas would then move on to consider items for noting where the information relates to strategic issues or matters over which the committee has a scrutiny role and to consider any consultation process information within the terms of reference of the committee. Thereafter items which are about sharing of relevant information would be included on agendas as one item, with members able to contact relevant officers to obtain further information if required, but the aim would be to discourage discussion of these items at committee/council meetings. This would ensure that elected members are kept abreast of current matters without the need for discussion on items which are purely for information. It is suggested that the process of considering matters which contain exempt or private information which must be dealt with after the exclusion of press and public would continue to be dealt with after all other agendas items have been concluded.

4.4.4 In respect of ensuring focused agendas and meetings members were keen to explore a process whereby officers would not routinely be expected to attend committee meetings to speak to the terms of their submitted reports, on the basis that all reports are submitted for inclusion and discussions at pre agenda process, and that finalised reports for committees are available and published with committee meeting packs. Members' expressed the opinion that such discipline should be the absolute norm, thereby providing members with well-crafted reports with clear recommendations in good time to enable members to read and digest information, and have the opportunity if required to discuss details with report authors in advance of discussion at committee. If this model were adopted it would be for the policy lead to present the report by the officer and make whatever motion in respect thereof. This approach would cut down the commitment for officers to attend two meetings [pre agenda and meeting] for the same agenda items. There would also be a reduction in time for meetings as questions to officers would not be a part of each item.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report outlines a range of considerations to be factored into the determination of a preferred operating model for future political management arrangements. Critical to the success of any future model will be the provision of clear and effective governance structures. The model should also take account of the available staff resources to support such a model, and have regard to the number of meetings that members might then be expected to participate in annually.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – none at this stage.

6.2 Financial - none at present, but may be financial implications dependent on the outcome of the review.

6.3 Legal – none at this stage.

6.4 HR – none at present, but may have HR implications dependent on the outcome of the review.

6.5 Equalities - none

6.6 Risk -

6.7 Customer Service - none

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Current Committee Structure

Appendix 2 – Traditional Committee Structure

Appendix 3 – Executive/Cabinet Committee Structure