

# Report



Meeting: COUNTY COUNCIL

Date: 28 June 2007

Agenda Item Number:

## **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER**

### **NEW WAYS OF WORKING IN COUNCIL MEETINGS**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. In July 2006 Council approved a number of new and experimental ways of conducting business at Council meetings. An all party Member Reference Group has met to examine the success of the experiment and this report contains the recommendations of that Member reference group.

#### **2. Background Information**

- 2.1. Three new ways of working have been piloted starting at the Council Meeting in September 2006.
- 2.2. **Petitions**
  - 2.2.1. Rather than petitions being presented by the local member to the Chairman of the Council on the basis that the local member has to keep walking and cannot be stationery, the new way of working has allowed the local member to introduce and speak to the petition being presented.
  - 2.2.2. In addition a new process for a report to come back to Council meeting setting out the County Council response to petitions previously presented has been trialed.
  - 2.2.3. The Member Reference Group felt that these new arrangements had worked well. However, they felt that the time limit for a local member to introduce and speak to any petition being presented should be limited to one minute or less.

## **2.3. Cabinet Reports**

- 2.3.1.** Rather than each Cabinet Member presenting their reports individually under Standing Order 6 that the Leader moves each of the Cabinet reports “on block”.
- 2.3.2.** The Member Reference Group felt that this had worked successfully. They felt that questions to Cabinet Members on their reports should be done in order and that the Chairman should ask for any questions on each report in turn.

## **2.4. Three Minute Speech**

- 2.4.1.** That Members are given an opportunity to speak for 3 minutes on any particular issue which relates to matters relevant to their constituencies or any particular issues arising in their electoral division. This speech would not give rise to a debate on the issue or a question and answer session. A maximum of 30 minutes would be allotted on the agenda for such speeches; if more members wished to speak than time allowed selection of members would be decided by a ballot based on principals of equality and proportionality.
- 2.4.2.** The Member Reference Group had some concerns over the success of this trial. They felt that sometimes these speeches were not listened to by other members, time keeping had been over zealous and on occasions the speech had not related to a local issue. However, they noted that it gave the opposition parties an opportunity to raise issues.
- 2.4.3.** They felt that on balance the 3 minute speeches item should be retained.

## **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended:

- 3.1.** That the County Council approves the continuation of the proposals set out in this report regarding Petitions, Cabinet Reports and three minute speeches.
- 3.2.** That Council authorises the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to Council Standing Orders to give permanent effect to the new ways of working proposals.
- 3.3.** That a further review of the changes be undertaken by the Member Reference Group after 12 months and a further report brought to Council meeting in June 2008 to consider any further changes necessary.

### **Legal Services Comments (KK 18 06 07)**

"The proposals in this report are within the remit of full Council".

### **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

1. Report of the Monitoring Officer to Council dated 20 July 2006 on 'Proposals for New Ways of Working in Council Meetings'.
2. Notes of Member Reference Group held on 24 April 2007.

### **Electoral Divisions Affected**

All