

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

26 May 2016

Taking of Decisions Between Meetings

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable the Committee to consider the best approach to discuss the best approach to decision-making, when a decision is required before the next scheduled meeting.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That the Committee considers the options and information set out in this report.**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report has been drafted in response to a request from the Chairman and members of the Committee, who wish to discuss the best approach to dealing with decision-making, when a decision is required before the next scheduled meeting.

1.2 On 11 December 2013, Council halved the number of Council Business Committee meetings from 6 per year to 3 per year. Since the reduction was made, it has sometimes been difficult to respond in a timely manner to consultations, because meeting dates do not fit with response deadlines. Urgent Business Procedures have been used where necessary. The other issue which sometimes arises, because the number of Council meetings was also reduced as part of the same decision in 2013, is how to deal with changes to committee memberships. These can only be approved by this Committee or Council.

2.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

2.1 There are three options set out below for Members to discuss. The Urgent Business Procedure, mentioned in Option 2, is set out in the Constitution and the relevant paragraph is below for information.

There will be occasions when an urgent decision is needed and the matter cannot wait for the next meeting of Council or the appropriate Committee. On

these occasions the Chief Executive is authorised to make the necessary decision following consultation with the Chairman of the relevant Committee. Any decisions made under this procedure must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the decision-making body.

Although the urgent business procedure set out in the Constitution is carried out in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee only, in practice, it has been possible to obtain views of at least a few Members of the Committee on a consultation response to allow the Chairman to take those into account.

	Option 1: To call 'ad hoc' meetings to deal with consultation responses and any other pressing matters.	Option 2: To use urgent business procedures to deal with consultation responses and any other pressing matters.	Option 3: Mixture of option 1 and option 2, as appropriate.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows members to have a discussion together about the consultation and for the appropriate officer(s) to present a draft response. Very useful for technical matters where Members may have lots of questions. Discussions will be in a public meeting. 	Allows decision to be taken at very short notice or if it would be impossible for the Committee to meet and be quorate (if a suitable date could not be found where the Committee would be quorate, for example.)	Allows the best approach to be utilised for each circumstance. For example, changes to Committee Memberships are easily effected using the urgent business procedures, however a complex consultation response may raise lots of queries and discussion, which would be ideally suited to a public meeting.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five clear days' notice must be given between publication of the agenda and the meeting, for the meeting to be lawful. A room is required. Cost of staff to keep the Town Hall open if the meeting is held at 6pm and there no other meetings that night. Officer resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions can be taken without consulting any Member except the Chairman. Difficult to have a dialogue by email about a complex consultation. Also more difficult for Members to raise queries and receive answers and advice from expert officers. Discussions not public, although the decision will 	See other options – but this option 3 could help to minimise their potential impact.

	required to service meetings, including Senior Officer time to present consultation responses and answer questions.	be.	
Risks	Risk that adding in extra meetings will undermine the decision of Council in 2013 to reduce the number of meetings; a decision which has saved money and resources.	None identified. Business can be transacted in accordance with the Constitution at a meeting or via urgent business procedures.	See Options 1 and 2.

2.2 Further to the above, the Committee could recommend to Council that 'Changes to Committee Memberships' be included on the Council Agenda as a standing item (as it is for this Committee) so that there is an opportunity for group administrators to make changes at short notice at Council meetings.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 The options set out above are to assist the Committee in discussions about the best approach for future decisions.

<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no legal implications as a result of this report.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no quantifiable financial implications as a result of this report. It would be expected that any staffing costs for additional ad hoc meetings would be met from within existing resources and budgets, but this would be subject to meeting frequency and timing, etc.</p>
<p>OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>Human Resources: None.</p>

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer drafted this report in her role as Democratic Services Manager.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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