

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Special Council Meeting 2008 6th March 2008

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

That Members consider the process for the Special Council Meeting 2008.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Members consider the options and authorise the Head of Democratic Services to commence arrangements and develop proposals for this year's Special Council meeting.**
- (2) That Members agree the date of the Special Council meeting for 2008.**
- (3) That a progress report be submitted to the next meeting of Council Business Committee setting out proposals for the event and any financial implications.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the democratic modernisation proposals, Council has agreed that one meeting a year shall be designated as a special council meeting with the following remit:

That one of the existing autumn meetings of Council, shall be selected by the Council Business Committee and re-designated as a 'Special' Council meeting for any of the following purposes:

- Consideration of a single topic
- Hearing of an external speaker
- Meeting in assembly or forum
- Consideration of a local, regional or national issue
- Or other purpose to be determined by the Council Business Committee

Members may recall that in October 2007, the Special Council meeting was held at the Platform in Morecambe with the theme 'Celebrating our Culture, City, Coast and Countryside' which incorporated the launch of the review of the Council's Cultural Strategy.

The event was held in conjunction with Cultural Services with officers from Neighbourhood Management, Tourism and Corporate Strategy assisting. Representatives from partner organisations such as the Dukes, Williamson Park and Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board attended the event and had stalls.

The event was advertised in the local press and attracted Members of the public providing a good basis for future improvement.

A survey of Members to assess the success of the event was undertaken and the results were positive. 80% of Councillors found the event useful in terms of a consultation event, with 58% agreeing that it was successful as a Special Council meeting. 100% of Councillors who had attended the Special Council meeting in 2006 had found the 2007 meeting more useful.

With regard to the format of the event, 88% of Councillors felt it worked and 95% of Councillors who responded to the survey found the event to be enjoyable.

It is clear therefore that the interactive format of this event was more successful than the more traditional format of presentations to an audience utilised in 2006 and it is suggested that whatever theme or topic is chosen for 2008 the format of the event follow the pattern established in 2007.

2.0 Proposal Details

The Committee is requested to consider a suitable theme for Special Council 2008 to enable the planning to commence as soon as possible.

Since the format of last year's Special Council meeting worked well Members may wish to continue with an event in a similar format at the Platform which was felt to be an ideal venue.

A theme could be determined by contacting Service Heads to obtain information on any topics for consultation later this year or suggestions for other items of particular interest to Council taxpayers. In choosing a topic Members should have in mind the Council's priorities for the forthcoming year and ensure that the Special meeting is relevant in that context.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- (1)
 - (a) To agree to follow a similar format to 2007 on a topic to be determined.
 - (b) To experiment with a different format, inviting a speaker or holding a public assembly for example.
- (2) Members are requested to consider the most appropriate date for the Special Council meeting taking into account Council business. The dates available for this year's Special Council meeting are:

17th September
22nd October
19th November

4.0 Officer Preferred Option

Following the relative success of the event in 2007 the officer preferred option is Option 1(a), subject to a suitable topic being identified which is relevant in the context of the Council's priorities. This would enable the event to be run on similar lines but with improvements in light of lessons learnt in 2007.

5.0 Conclusion

Work will need to be done to ensure that the event is sufficiently focussed and relates to the Corporate Plan.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Whilst there are no implications arising directly from this report, there are clearly issues relating to diversity, sustainability and rural proofing that will need to be addressed in both planning the event and the topic under consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At this conceptual stage costings have not been obtained. Subject to approval at this meeting officers will fully cost the event, however it is believed that the event as envisaged is achievable within existing budgets.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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