

# **SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA**



**25 November 2011**

**at 9.00am**

**in the Council Chamber**

**MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:**

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Cook, Fenwick, Griffin, James, Loynes, A Marshall, Preece, Richardson, Rogan, Shaw, Shields, Thomas, Wells and Wilcox.

Resident Representatives: Maureen Braithwaite, Evelyn Leck and John Maxwell.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**  
No Items
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**  
No Items
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**  
No Items

**6. FORWARD PLAN**

No Items

**7. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No Items

**8. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS**

No Items

**9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

No Items

**10. CALL-IN REQUESTS**

- 10.1 Call-In of Decision: Delivery of Support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny Functions – *Scrutiny Manager*

**11. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- i) **Date of Next Meeting 2 December 2011, commencing at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber.**

## SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

25 November 2011



**Report of:** Scrutiny Manager

**Subject:** CALL-IN OF DECISION: DELIVERY OF SUPPORT TO MEMBERS AND TO THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE, NON EXECUTIVE AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with the relevant information relating to the Call-In of the decision taken by Cabinet on the 7 November 2011 in relation to 'Delivery Of Support To Members And To The Council, Executive, Non Executive And Scrutiny Functions'.
- 1.2 To enable the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to:-
  - i) Make a decision in relation to the acceptance or rejection of the Call-in; and
  - ii) Consider, subject to the acceptance of the Call-in, the formulation of a response / comments for consideration by Cabinet (via the Proper Officer).

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on the 7 November 2011, considered a report in relation to 'Delivery of Support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny Functions'. The report considered by Cabinet is attached at **Appendix A**. The decision subsequently taken by Cabinet in relation to this report / issue is outlined in the minute extract, attached at **Appendix B** (minute No. 148 refers).
- 2.2 A Call-In Notice in relation to the decision taken by Cabinet was submitted by 3 Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 18 November 2011. A copy of the Notice is attached at **Appendix C**. This notice was received by the Proper Officer on the 18 November 2011 and met the constitutional requirements for its acceptance.

### 3. CALL-IN PROCESS

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee has the power under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules to call-in decisions made by the Executive but not yet implemented.
- 3.2 The Call-In notification outlined the reasons why the Members were of the opinion that the decision should be called in. A summary of the reasons identified in the Call-In Notice being:-

#### **Budget and Policy Framework:-**

- i) Decision 2(v) – Reason: The intimation received from cabinet members in relation to this decision is that it is intended to be active from April 2012 however the Mayor has already issued instructions that the pending meeting of NAC and the associated attendance arrangements be cancelled.

The decision relating to conference attendance is contrary to the Council decision and current budget (e.g. the Council has appointed 3 delegates to the National Association of Councillors and a budget to enable them to participate in the groups work).

#### **Principles of Decision Making:-**

The decision(s) taken by Cabinet, as detailed above, contravene the principles of decision making as detailed below:-

- i) Proportionality - Decision 2 (i-iii and v) 3 (i and ii)
- ii) In accordance with the constitution - Decision 1 (i-vi)
- iii) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers - Decision 1 (i-v) 3 (i)
- iv) Respect for human rights and equality - Decision 2 (i,iv and v)
- v) Best value - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (v) 3 (ii)
- vi) A presumption in favour of openness - Decision 1 (i-vi) 2 (iii) 3 (i and ii)
- vii) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (iii and v)
- viii) Due consideration of options available to the decision taker - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i-viii) 3 ( 1 and ii)
- x) Subsidiarity (i.e. delegation of decisions to the most appropriate level) - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i - v) 3 (i)
- xi) Efficiency (i.e. decisions must not be unnecessarily delayed) - Decision 3 (ii)
- xii) Reasonableness - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i - vi) 3 (i and ii)

- 3.3 Full reasons are outlined in the Call-In Notice attached at **Appendix C**.

- 3.4 In this instance, the reasons identified cover both categories of Call-In, as outlined in Article 13 of the Constitution:-

**Category 1** – The decision been taken in contravention of the principles of decision making; and

**Category 2** – The decision falls outside the budget and policy framework.

#### 4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 In the first instance the Committee must decide whether it agrees with the Members submitting the Call-In that the decision should be Called-In for the reasons set out in the Notice. If the Call-In is accepted, the reasons identified in the notice should then form the basis for the Committee's consideration of the decision. If the Call-In is rejected the will then the decision will be immediately implemented

- 4.2 As the reasons identified within the notice cover both categories of Call-In, the Committee will at its earliest opportunity:-

- i) **Category 1** element of the Call-In - Consider evidence from Cabinet, and appropriate Officers.

If after consideration of the information provided, the Committee remains concerned about the decision(s) taken a report outlining its comments will then be presented to Cabinet to enable re-examination of its decision(s).

- ii) **Category 2** element of the Call-In - Receive advice from the Monitoring Officer and / or Chief Finance Officer. The Constitution requires that the Committee acts in accordance with the advice provided and there are two options for a way forward at this point:

- Should advice be that the decision is outside (or not wholly within) the budget and policy framework (BPF), and in accordance with the budget the decision must be referred to Council; or

- Should advice be that the decision is within the BPF, and in accordance with the budget, the decision can be implemented.

- 4.3 Please note that where the advice provided is that the decision is outside (or not wholly within) the budget and policy framework (BPF), the Portfolio Holder will be given the opportunity to review the decision prior to the decision being referred to Council.

- 4.4 If Cabinet should refuse to either review or revise the element of the decision which is outside (or not wholly within) the BPF, the decision will be considered by Council. Council then has three options:-

- (i) Agree the decision does not fall outside the BPF (*decision will the be implemented*);
- (ii) Agree the decision falls outside the BPF (*BPF amended to accommo0date the decision*); or
- (iii) Require the Executive to reconsider the matter, modifying the decision or proposing a change to the BPF.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 That Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee decide if they wish to accept or reject the Call-In Notice;

5.2 That subject to acceptance of the Call-in:

- i) Consideration be given to the whether the decisions detailed in the Call-In Notice (as attached at Appendix C) were:
  - Outside the Budget and Policy Framework; and
  - Contravened the Principles of Decision Making (as outlined in Section 13 of the Constitution)
- ii) Should the Committee be of the view that the decisions detailed in Section 2.1 above were not taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making, comments be formulated for consideration by Cabinet (via the Proper Officer).

**Contact Officer:-** Joan Stevens– Scrutiny Manager  
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
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## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Hartlepool Borough Council's Constitution
- (ii) Agenda and Minutes - Cabinet - 7 November 2011
- (iii) Call-in Notice - 18 November 2011

# CABINET REPORT

25 November 2011



**Report of:** Assistant Chief Executive

**Subject:** DELIVERY OF SUPPORT TO MEMBERS AND TO THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE, NON EXECUTIVE AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS.

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## SUMMARY

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider options and potential changes to the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions.

### 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report sets out a number of options and potential changes in respect of the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions. The options and changes reflect the budget deficits that the Council is continuing to face, the consequent reduced officer base to support the identified functions and the cessation or scaling down of a number of services and activities. The report reflects a reduction in the Council size to 33 Councillors, in 2012, as a result of Electoral review recommendations. The outcomes of a range of consultation research to inform the 2011 budget process are also recognised.

The report details a number of arrangements and practices which have been categorised into those areas which are considered appropriate for immediate review, those that could be agreed for implementation for Municipal Year 2012-13 as well as other areas that could be considered.

### 3. RELEVANCE TO CABINET

The options and potential changes arising from the review impact upon Executive functions.

### 4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-Key

**5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE**

Cabinet

**6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED**

Cabinet is recommended to consider and determine their decisions in respect of the following NB for clarity in decision making the portfolio holder view in respect of a number of the recommendations has been incorporated for Cabinets consideration:

- (i) That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full Council.
- (ii) That the introduction of Task and Finish Groups be monitored to ensure it is resourceable.
- (iii) Cabinet to give consideration to the constitution being reviewed annually and consideration to be given to the abolition of the Constitution Committee as a significant number of authorities review the constitution through the Monitoring officer, as indicated through the modular constitution.
  - Portfolio holder view  
That the constitution is reviewed (and any amendments therein made) once a year. That the constitution committee remains in place to make recommendations to the annual council.
- (iv) For Cabinet to identify preferred mechanism for managing the number of meetings which are held.
- (v) A 'freeze' to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in either written or verbal form.
- (vi) That consideration be given to extending the functions of the Standards Committee to include monitoring attendance of Members at induction and training sessions.
- (vii) Consideration to be given to the potential of options outlined in 3.1.1 (v) in the main report and the reconfiguration of the committees identified, including the potential for their merging. This will also need consideration in terms of best practice, legal and constitutional matters.
  - Portfolio holder view
    - i. That the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) be a stand alone committee with a fixed membership.
    - ii. That the remaining GP functions be rolled into the functions of the Audit Committee and the Contract Scrutiny Committee to form one expanded "Operations Committee", with exclusively backbench membership.



- (viii) Consideration be given to the composition of the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee being a fixed membership rather than being selected from a rota.
  - Portfolio holder view  
As above.
- (ix) consideration is given to the review of Members accommodation
- (x) Members to consider the options for the number and configuration of Scrutiny Forums and identify potential preferred options.
  - Portfolio holder view
    - i. That the number of Scrutiny forums be reduced from 6 to 4 through the merging of neighbourhood services and regeneration and planning and Health to be rolled back into adult services to reflect the council's new public health role.
    - ii. That the 2 SRA savings be allocated to scrutiny to assist its work.
- (xi) It is not recommended that all current committees be maintained with reduced membership with Cabinet to identify any preferred options to be considered.
- (xii) The mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated savings
- (xiii) That consideration be given to improving access to Members' ICT and an ICT 'offer' be worked up that significantly reduces costs and then becomes a pre-requisite of holding office from 2012 onwards
- (xiv) That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease and appendices are not printed but available electronically.

**Report of:** Assistant Chief Executive

**Subject:** DELIVERY OF SUPPORT TO MEMBERS AND TO THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE, NON EXECUTIVE AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS.

---

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider options and potential changes to the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The report sets out a number of options and potential changes in respect of the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions. The options and changes reflect the budget deficits that the Council is continuing to face, the consequent reduced officer base to support the identified functions and the cessation or scaling down of a number of services and activities. The report reflects a reduction in the Council size to 33 Councillors, in 2012, as a result of Electoral review recommendations. The outcomes of a range of consultation research to inform the 2011/12 budget process are also recognised.
- 2.2 The report is set out against a background of the agreed budget for 2011/12 and the deficits faced over the next 3 years. As Members are aware detailed analysis of the figures in the CSR demonstrates the actual DCLG cut is not evenly spread over this period and is actually “front loaded” over the first 2 years. The Business Transformation Programme and the contribution it can make to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been revisited in the light of the new financial position the authority faces. The MTFS indicates that even after reflecting the Business Transformation Programme, increasing the savings delivered by this programme (from £1.3m to £2.9M for 2011/12) and a range of other measures the Council still faces a budget deficit for 2012/13 of £6.6m and a cumulative figure of over £14m over the next 3 years. As part of the budget process for 2011/12 there has been a reduction in the staffing resource in respect of the democratic support functions (the reduction of one post in democratic services and the reallocation of current workloads), the reduction in Member Support resources and in administration teams in departments supporting the production of reports. There has been no commensurate reduction in the actual workload and essentially we have the same or increased requirements to support with fewer resources. This position, the further budget reductions that are required and the reduction in the number of

members means that this position requires review and will not be sustainable in the medium term.

- 2.3 A draft of this report has been offered for consideration to the political groups. The Portfolio Holder for Performance (as was) has attended a number of meetings in respect of this.
- 2.4 The report covers a number of areas of potential change and Cabinet are, as part of their consideration of the options and questions posed, asked to identify their preferred or proposed solutions.
- 2.5 The changes to the size of the Council will require a review of the Constitution and this process has commenced through a Constitution working group. The issues raised in this report, Cabinet considerations and any decisions of Cabinet will need to form part of these considerations.

### **3. AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to the delivery of support to Members, Council, Executive, non executive and Scrutiny functions. The outcomes of these considerations are set out in the report in terms of the following potential categories:-

- Immediate review – areas that are appropriate to review immediately due to the nature of the recommendations.
- To be agreed for implementation for Municipal Year 2012-13

The areas comprising each of the four categories are set out below:-

#### **3.1.1 Immediate Review**

##### **(i) Members' Seminars**

Members' Seminars have formed part of the briefing arrangements for the authority for some considerable period of time. They are scheduled monthly and are held twice for each seminar. Over the last year there have been a number of members seminars organised. For those Members who don't attend a seminar a summary of the content is sent to members for their information.

It is recognised that it is important to ensure that members are informed of new and developing areas and major programmes that the authority is either involved in or undertaking on its own behalf. However, statistics relating to attendance at Seminars indicate that the current mechanism does not appear to be working and attendance is generally very low. There is no direct and accountable saving in respect of this change but it will release some capacity from officers currently supporting or involved in these seminars. It is important to note that the Planning Code of Practice,

Licensing Policy calls for Member training and these regulatory areas of competency to be given priority.

**Recommendation** - That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full council.

## **(ii) Constitution Review**

The Model Constitution acknowledged that Local authorities may wish to adopt procedural rules for when they wish to propose to Council that the constitution is changed. Following consideration of the legitimacy of the Constitution Working Group, it has been agreed recently that the operation of the Constitution Working Group no longer continue. The Constitution Committee will continue and have Task and Finish Groups arranged on an ad hoc basis to enable particular issues to be considered on a time-specific basis. These Task and Finish Groups would then report to the Committee for any further action required. A significant number of authorities review the constitution through the Monitoring Officer, as indicated through the Modular Constitution

It is noted that of those Authorities who have replied to a benchmarking survey, the majority review their Constitution annually. Annual review is an option to be considered. During the previous Municipal Year, there were 19 reports considered at Constitution Working Group and Constitution Committee meetings covering 5 topics agreed as part of the annual work programme for 2009/10 and an additional 8 items of Any Other Business also considered.

**Recommendation** – That the introduction of Task and Finish Groups be monitored to ensure it is resourceable. Cabinet to give consideration to the constitution being reviewed annually and consideration to be given to the abolition of the Constitution Committee as a significant number of authorities review the constitution through the Monitoring officer, as indicated through the modular constitution.

## **(iii) Scheduled Meetings**

At the start of each municipal year a meetings calendar is organised by the Democratic Services Team which covers all of the committees encompassed by the Constitution. As an example in 2008/09 Municipal Year 450 meetings were held of which 305 were scheduled. Almost 50% were, therefore, not scheduled meetings. Whilst it could be argued that the additional meetings are required, this is a high proportion of unplanned meetings which has a significant impact on planning of work, impact on the Democratic Services Team in terms of arrangements and servicing but also on other officers (particularly in respect of report writing and attendance at these meetings but

also on a slightly less significant scale in terms of printing costs). The number of unscheduled meetings varies across different categories of meetings. In terms of scrutiny, which tends to be the area with most additional meetings, there were 104 meetings serviced and 56 of those were additional meetings (a 117% increase in meetings over those scheduled).

NB – since May of this year there have been 222 meetings in total (of which 145 were scheduled and 77 unscheduled , an increase of 35%)

Whilst recognising that elected Members retain the right to agree as many meetings as they consider necessary, the number of unscheduled meetings has to be balanced by a recognition that there are less resources to support the democratic function. A reduction in the number of meetings overall may result in identifiable efficiencies.

**Recommendation** – To identify preferred mechanism for managing the number of meetings which are held.

#### **(iv) Attendance at Conferences**

If a Member is interested in attending a conference, approval is required from Mayor and Chief Executive. At a time when resources are tight, the value of attending conferences, where conference fees are involved, has to be questioned as it is with officers and the possibility of ‘freezing’ attendances has to be considered. In the exceptional event that a conference is approved, a Member attending a conference or seminar should be required to either give a five minute oral presentation or present a written report to Council to demonstrate the value of attendance at the Conference – this is procedure which was previously introduced by Council in 2005.

**Recommendation** – A ‘freeze’ to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in either written or verbal form.

#### **(v) Standards Committee/ Contract Scrutiny Committee / General Purposes / Audit Committee**

The functions of the Standards Committee includes ‘advising, training or arranging to train the mayor, councillors, co-opted members and governor representatives on matters relating to the Members’ Code of Conduct. It is proposed that consideration be given to extending the functions of the Committee to include monitoring attendance of Members.

Contract Scrutiny Committee has recently changed remit and function following consideration by Constitution Committee and Constitution Working group. The functions of this Committee now encompass a range of functions which are included in the constitution. Recognition needs to be given to the

work of the Committee. However, whilst not significant in terms of time and resource is, along with the range of other areas covered in this note, part of an overall picture. We are the only Council in the Tees Valley which has this Committee. If this is to be progressed it will need to be investigated in more detail, including legal advice.

In addition consideration could be given to the potential for a number of currently existing Committee arrangements to assess the extent to which their functions may be potentially combined to increase efficiency and provide a clear a focused role. Included in this could be the potential to combine the roles of Audit Committee and Contract Scrutiny Committee ie., Audit and Governance approach.

In terms of GP (Appeals and Staffing) Committee, a lot of time is spent organising these meetings and convening those meetings from a rota of Members it would be potentially beneficial to giving consideration to a fixed membership of this Committee and to meetings being scheduled monthly in the Democratic Services diary.

### **Recommendations**

- That consideration be given to extending the functions of the Standards Committee to include monitoring attendance of Members at induction and training sessions.
- Consideration to be given to the potential of options outlined above and the reconfiguration of the committees identified, including the potential for their merging and a change in remit. This will also need consideration in terms of best practice, legal and constitutional matters.
- Consideration be given to the composition of the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee being a fixed membership rather than being selected from a rota.

### **vi) Reports/Minutes/Decision Records for Members**

The reports, minutes and decision records that are provided to members are generally comprehensive and detailed and provide both information relating to the decision required and contextual information. There is an inherent resource requirement in reports of this nature and they are effective in providing sufficient information (in most cases) for members to make the decisions required – although the decisions are not always taken. An assessment suggests 29 full time equivalents (FTEs) supporting this process. One area which could easily be reduced relates to summary sheets which accompany executive reports. This system has been in place a number of years (pre 2002) and was initially intended for the benefit of those Members who did not receive actual reports – they received just the summary sheet to give them a flavour of what the report was about. There are, however, no Members who only receive the summary sheet and their use is therefore questionable.

**Recommendation** – That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease and that appendices are made available electronically.

### 3.1.2 To be agreed for implementation for Municipal Year 2012 - 13

#### (i) Scrutiny Forums

Under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, Authorities operating executive arrangements must appoint one or more overview and scrutiny committees. In assessing future overview and scrutiny arrangements consideration needs to be given to the number of members required to effectively fulfill the scrutiny function. There is no statutory requirement for every non executive member to be involved in overview and scrutiny meetings.

On the basis of the financing of the authority and the number of Members attending Scrutiny Forums, there is merit in considering reducing the number of scrutiny forums to coincide with the change in departmental organisation and reducing budgets overall of the Council. In addition, reports have been submitted to Members on the White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS' which includes the health scrutiny and referral function where guidance is currently unclear on how this should be taken forward.

There are a number of options available in respect of scrutiny forums:

- To maintain the current 6 forums (including SCC)
- To realign them to the departments and merge i) Children's and Adult and Community Services and ii) Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Planning (thereby reducing the number to 4)
- As above and add incorporate Health scrutiny into either one of the above or SCC (reducing the number further to 3)
- Amalgamate functions of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum and Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum and maintain other 5 Forums (including Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)
- As above and combine the Health and Adult Services forums to reflect the role of the local authority in public health
- Or other permutations from the above

There are a number of issues to consider in such a proposal. If the budget of the authority, as expected, is to reduce significantly then there should be a commensurate reduction in the scale of scrutiny to ensure there is an effective balance with the shape and size of the authority and the balance of resources is maintained in respect of delivery and scrutiny. To date through the current budget exercises there has been no direct impact on the scrutiny support function (although there has been a limited reallocation of tasks).

The detailed financial implications of this have not been fully quantified, but there would be a potential reduction required in SRA's for scrutiny chairs, as well as reductions in democratic services (already achieved) and scrutiny functions. NB it should be noted that such a reduction in staffing resources cannot be achieved without the cooperation of members.

**Recommendation** – members to consider the options for the number and configuration of Scrutiny Forums and identify potential preferred options.

## ii) Size of Committees

Any consideration of the options included here should be considered in conjunction with the considerations above in respect of the number of scrutiny forums (and potentially in respect of Cabinet as well).

In the light of the reduction of the number of elected members there is the option to consider a commensurate and proportionate reduction in the size of all committees, essentially reducing the membership by approximately one third across all committees. Essentially this would provide for a proportionate reduction in membership but would not necessarily result in any reduction in the number of meetings, staffing resources required to support and service these or SRA's.

**Recommendation**- it is not recommended that all current committees be maintained with reduced membership and Cabinet are requested to identify any preferred options to be considered.

## iii) Cabinet

The Constitution states that the Executive will consist of the Mayor and at least 2 but may not exceed 10 Councillors appointed to the Executive by the Mayor. The Mayor's first Cabinet comprised 6 Members. Cabinet currently consists of 9 elected members and this has been increased by 2 from the previous municipal year when it was 7. In the same way as consideration is being given to other areas of operation and whether they can be more efficient and effective and yet still deliver the required results then the make up and number of Cabinet members should be given consideration. The reduction of the size of the Cabinet (dependant on whether the Cabinet member is also a group leader) by 1 reduces the costs by £5.7K.

**Recommendation** - The mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated savings



#### **iv) Members ICT**

At the meeting of the Constitution Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and again at the meeting on 11 June 2010, Members discussed issues associated with the provision of Members ICT NB this was also highlighted as part of the Telphony call in. Discussion took place regarding the increasing reliance of Members on ICT and current ICT contract arrangements.

Democratic Services Team have worked with Officers, press and resident representatives to encourage receipt of agendas and supporting documentation electronically. This has resulted in a number of efficiencies. The one area where progress has not been made over years relates to Members receiving papers electronically which is preventing additional efficiencies and changes of working practices including printing multiple copies of diary. There would also no longer be need for papers to be delivered by courier.

**Recommendation** – That consideration be given to improving access to Members' ICT and an ICT 'offer' be worked up that significantly reduces costs and then becomes a pre-requisite of holding office from 2012 onwards.

#### **v) Accommodation**

Members' accommodation is an area which could also be considered. There have been a number of changes over the last 4 – 5 years in respect of rationalising this accommodation and it would be appropriate to reconsider the current allocations, the use of these, improvements where appropriate and whether there are appropriate alternatives which could be considered. These could be considered in a similar manner to those changes which are occurring in the broader accommodation strategy and space use.

Recommendation – consideration is given to the review of Members accommodation

### **3.0 Conclusion**

There are a wide range of possible changes to the delivery of support to Members in terms of executive and non executive functions. As a consequence, a number of arrangements and practices have been categorised into those areas appropriate for immediate review, those which require a phased approach, those that should be reviewed in 2012 in conjunction with the implementation of the Electoral Review recommendations as well as other areas that could be considered.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to consider and determine their decisions in respect of the following NB for clarity in decision making the portfolio holder

view in respect of a number of the recommendations has been incorporated for Cabinets consideration:

- (i) That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full Council.
- (ii) That the introduction of Task and Finish Groups be monitored to ensure it is resourceable.
- (iii) Cabinet to give consideration to the constitution being reviewed annually and consideration to be given to the abolition of the Constitution Committee as a significant number of authorities review the constitution through the Monitoring officer, as indicated through the modular constitution.
  - Portfolio holder view  
That the constitution is reviewed (and any amendments therein made) once a year. That the constitution committee remains in place to make recommendations to the annual council.
- (iv) For Cabinet to identify preferred mechanism for managing the number of meetings which are held.
- (v) A 'freeze' to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. . In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in either written or verbal form.
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- (vii) Consideration to be given to the potential of options outlined in 3.1.1 (v) in the main report and the reconfiguration of the committees identified, including the potential for their merging. This will also need consideration in terms of best practice, legal and constitutional matters.
  - Portfolio holder view
    - i. That the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) be a stand alone committee with a fixed membership.
    - ii. That the remaining GP functions be rolled into the functions of the Audit Committee and the Contract Scrutiny Committee to form one expanded "Operations Committee", with exclusively backbench membership.
- (viii) Consideration be given to the composition of the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) Committee being a fixed membership rather than being selected from a rota.
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As above.
- (ix) consideration is given to the review of Members accommodation
- (x) Members to consider the options for the number and configuration of Scrutiny Forums and identify potential preferred options.
  - Portfolio holder view

That the number of Scrutiny forums be reduced from 6 to 4 through the merging of neighbourhood services and regeneration and planning and Health to be rolled back into adult services to reflect the council's new public health role.

That the 2 SRA savings be allocated to scrutiny to assist its work.

- (xi) It is not recommended that all current committees be maintained with reduced membership with Cabinet to identify any preferred options to be considered.
- (xii) The mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated savings
- (xiii) That consideration be given to improving access to Members' ICT and an ICT 'offer' be worked up that significantly reduces costs and then becomes a pre-requisite of holding office from 2012 onwards
- (xiv) That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease and appendices are made available electronically.

## **5.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations reflect the budget deficits that the Council is continuing to face, the consequent reduced officer base to support the identified functions and the cessation or scaling down of a number of services and activities. The report reflects a reduction in the Council size to 33 Councillors, in 2012, as a result of Electoral review recommendations. The outcomes of a range of consultation research to inform the 2011 budget process are also recognised.

## **6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers to this report

## **7.0 CONTACT OFFICER**

Andrew Atkin

# CABINET

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

7 NOVEMBER 2011

### EXTRACT

The meeting commenced at 9.15 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

#### **Present:**

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: Jonathan Brash (Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder)  
Robbie Payne (Deputy Mayor) (Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder),  
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder).  
Peter Jackson (Regeneration and Economic Development and Skills Portfolio Holder),  
Chris Simmons (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),  
Hilary Thompson (Performance Portfolio Holder),

Officers: Nicola Bailey, Acting Chief Executive  
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive,  
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer  
Alyson Carman, Head of Legal Services  
Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods  
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Planning  
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources  
Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director, Performance and Achievement  
Zoe Westley, Head of Social and Education Inclusion  
Alastair Rae, Public Relations Manager  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

#### **148. Delivery of Support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny Functions** (Assistant Chief Executive)

##### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

##### **Purpose of report**

To consider options and potential changes to the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Housing and Transition Portfolio Holder reported on a number of options and potential changes in respect of the delivery of support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny functions. The options and changes reflect the budget deficits that the Council is continuing to face, the consequent reduced officer base to support the identified functions and the cessation or scaling down of a number of services and activities. The report reflected a reduction in the Council size to 33 Councillors in 2012 as a result of Electoral review recommendations. The outcomes of a range of consultation research to inform the 2011/12 budget process were also recognised.

The report set a series of areas for consideration and made recommendations in relation to each, which the portfolio holder had also commented upon, which included for immediate consideration; Members' Seminars, Constitution Review, Scheduled Meetings, Attendance at Conferences, Standards Committee / Contract Scrutiny Committee / General Purposes Committee / Audit Committee, and Reports / Minutes / decision Records for members. Further recommendations to be agreed for implementation for the 2012/13 Municipal Year included; Scrutiny Forums, sizes of Committees, Cabinet, Members' ICT and Members' Accommodation.

Cabinet's discussions centred around the main sections and recommendations within the report as follows: -

**Members' Seminars**

It was considered that Members Seminars could be stopped immediately as attendance was generally very poor. If it was essential to brief members on issues, seminars could be carried out immediately before Council meetings.

**Constitution Review**

The Mayor commented that Hartlepool was one of a very limited number of authorities that undertook the review of the constitution in this way and considered that, following the 2012 elections, reviews were only needed once each year and should be undertaken by the Monitoring Officer. This view was supported by Cabinet. The Mayor was concerned that there had been constitution changes that had not been implemented in accordance with the appropriate procedures. Cabinet agreed that this matter should be referred to Scrutiny for comments.

**Scheduled Meetings**

There was great concern at the number of additional meetings called during the year and the impact these additional meetings had. The Mayor and other Cabinet Members were particularly concerned at the number of

additional Task and Finish Groups that were being established and that little appeared to have come from these to the executive. The Mayor stated that Members needed to be aware of the number of additional meetings and the lack of capacity to deal with them. Cabinet was also concerned that the majority of the additional Task and Finish and Working Groups were closed meetings.

It was considered that there needed to be closer adherence to the agreed diary. There was a brief discussion on mechanisms to limit the number of additional meetings but it was considered that they would have little effect. Cabinet considered that this was an issue that needed to be considered by Scrutiny.

#### Attendance at Conferences

It was agreed that the recommendations on conferences could be supported and implemented immediately without need for referral to scrutiny.

#### Standards Committee/ Contract Scrutiny Committee / General Purposes / Audit Committee

Cabinet considered that the issues relating to contracts were statutory ones that fell within the executive's remit. The Contracts Scrutiny Committee should therefore be deleted and the responsibility for opening tenders transferred to the executive. In all other authorities this duty was undertaken by executive members and processes could be established to do so in Hartlepool with tenders being delegated to either one specific Cabinet Member or to the relevant Portfolio Holder. There would also be a subsequent SRA saving. Scrutiny should be invited to comment on this proposal.

It was agreed that Appeals and Staffing would work better with a set membership and as a separate body. Standards Committee's role should be increased to include monitoring Members attendances. All other matters should be moved to a single 'Operations' Committee. Scrutiny should also be invited to comment on these proposals.

#### Reports/Minutes/Decision Records for Members

It was agreed that the use of Summary sheets to reports should be ended as soon as practical. Cabinet discussed the issue of all appendices being made available in electronic form only and it was agreed that there should be copies available in the Members Library and on request, as well as electronically.

The Mayor indicated that it would be helpful to make decision making more responsive but was advised that there was legislation through the Access to Information rules which protected public access and transparency to decision making.

### Scrutiny Forums

The Mayor commented that there were only four Scrutiny Committees/Forums when the Council adopted the new structure in 2002 and considered that that had worked well. The numbers on the committees/forums should also reduce proportionally with the reduction in the size of Council. There was national recognition for the scrutiny operation of Hertfordshire County Council which only had one scrutiny committee that transacted all its business in one day. The Mayor suggested that consideration should be given to reducing the numbers to three committees/forums.

Cabinet Members indicated that it had been suggested that the 'Regeneration' and 'Neighbourhoods' Forums could be combined comfortably. 'Health' could recombine with the 'Adults' forum as previously, particularly in light of the changes in legislation and the work the new Health and Wellbeing Board would be responsible for. It was suggested that this board would be an additional check and balance on the NHS, which would allow Scrutiny to devote more time to the Council's new Public Health Function. The statutory powers, currently discharged by Health Scrutiny, would be retained within the scrutiny function.

Cabinet considered the suggestion that any Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) savings should go back to Scrutiny. Cabinet suggested that as this was an exercise in reducing the overall budget of Members Support, the savings should be made as a contribution to the overall process.

Cabinet considered that Scrutiny was well aware of issues the Council would face from May 2012 and referred this element to Scrutiny for its deliberation.

### Size of Committees

Members agreed that the change in the overall size of Council should as a minimum be reflected in the size of committees, forums and other groups after May 2012. Concerns were expressed about the membership of some of the Licensing Committee sub committees and their capacity to cope with a reduced overall membership and that this would have to be looked at specifically in the round.

### Cabinet

The Mayor noted that the Constitution (and legislation) allowed a Cabinet of between two and ten members including himself. With a reduced council of 33 members the Mayor considered that based on current numbers a Cabinet of up to seven would reflect that change but the issue would need to be judged sensibly.

### Members ICT

Members did not feel it was appropriate to set a 'pre-requisite standard' in relation to members' use of ICT. Cabinet was of the view that the current systems were cumbersome and frequently prone to problems and Members would gravitate to a system that could be shown to be easy to operate and reliable. The Assistant Chief Executive requested that should any member have issues with the authorities ICT systems or equipment, they should report them to him so that they could be addressed.

### Accommodation

Cabinet considered that further discussions were required on accommodation and that all Members should have the right to input on this issue. Members commented that the accommodation was essentially what Members were given as opposed to an assessment of need.

The Mayor also added that a review of the Council's Outside Bodies should be undertaken to review exactly what bodies the Council did need to be part of. Reducing the numbers on bodies should also be a part of the review.

At the conclusion of the debate, Cabinet indicated that in order to complete the review appropriately, Scrutiny's views on the issues referred should be requested to be reported to Cabinet before Christmas.

### **Decision**

1. That the following Cabinet recommendations be forwarded to scrutiny for its view with a report coming back to Cabinet prior to Christmas 2011.
  - (i) That the constitution be reviewed annually through the Monitoring officer and that the Constitution Committee be abolished, following the 2012 elections.
  - (ii) That the functions of the Standards Committee be extended to include monitoring attendance of Members at induction and training sessions.
  - (iii) That the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) become a standalone committee with a fixed membership.
  - (iv) That the remaining General Purposes Committee functions be combined with the functions of the Audit Committee to form one expanded "Operations Committee", with exclusively backbench membership.
  - (v) That the Contract Scrutiny Committee be abolished and the functions relating to contracts/tenders be undertaken by the executive.



- (vi) That the number of Scrutiny forums be reduced from six to four through the merging of neighbourhood services and regeneration and planning forums and Health to be combined with Adult Services to reflect the council's new public health role.
2. That the following Cabinet recommendations be implemented forthwith;
- (i) That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full Council.
  - (ii) That the introduction of Task and Finish / Working Groups be monitored to ensure they are resourceable.
  - (iii) That task and finish groups be conducted in public, except where the information being discussed is exempt under the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
  - (iv) That Committee / Forum / Group Chairs be made advised of their responsibility in ensuring that only those additional meetings that are unavoidable are called in light of the additional workload the number of additional meetings over and above the agreed Council Diary are creating.
  - (v) That a 'freeze' to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in both written and verbal form.
  - (vi) That a review of Members accommodation be undertaken involving all Councillors based on the principle of need.
  - (vii) That further consideration be given to improving Members' ICT with the aim of reducing costs and simplifying its use and that all Councillors be encouraged to utilise the systems available to them.
  - (viii) That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease as soon as practicable and that appendices to reports are not customarily printed but available electronically, on request and in the Members Library.
3. That the following Cabinet recommendations be approved for implementation for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.
- (i) That the size of all committees / forums established / reappointed after May 2012 reflect the reduction in the overall size of Council.

- (ii) The Mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated savings in line with the parameters set out in legislation and the Constitution.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 14 NOVEMBER 2011**

# Hartlepool Borough Council

## Overview and Scrutiny – Call-in Notice – Scrutiny Chairs



### 1. Which decision would you like to call-in?

(Please include details of the decision, when it was taken and by whom)

Cabinet Decision – 7 November 2011 - Minute No. 148 – Delivery of Support to Members and to the Council, Executive, Non Executive and Scrutiny Functions

Decision:-

1. That the following Cabinet recommendations be forwarded to scrutiny for its view with a report coming back to Cabinet prior to Christmas 2011.
  - (i) That the constitution be reviewed annually through the Monitoring officer and that the Constitution Committee be abolished, following the 2012 elections.
  - (ii) That the functions of the Standards Committee be extended to include monitoring attendance of Members at induction and training sessions.
  - (iii) That the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) become a standalone committee with a fixed membership.
  - (iv) That the remaining General Purposes Committee functions be combined with the functions of the Audit Committee to form one expanded "Operations Committee", with exclusively backbench membership.
  - (v) That the Contract Scrutiny Committee be abolished and the functions relating to contracts/tenders be undertaken by the executive.
  - (vi) That the number of Scrutiny forums be reduced from six to four through the merging of neighbourhood services and regeneration and planning forums and Health to be combined with Adult Services to reflect the council's new public health role.
2. That the following Cabinet recommendations be implemented forthwith;
  - (i) That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full Council.
  - (ii) That the introduction of Task and Finish / Working Groups be monitored to ensure they are resourceable.
  - (iii) That task and finish groups be conducted in public, except where the information being discussed is exempt under the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
  - (iv) That Committee / Forum / Group Chairs be made advised of their responsibility in ensuring that only those additional meetings that are unavoidable are called in light of the additional workload the number of additional meetings over and above the agreed Council Diary are creating.
  - (v) That a 'freeze' to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in both written and verbal form.
  - (vi) That a review of Members accommodation be undertaken involving all Councillors based on the principle of need.
  - (vii) That further consideration be given to improving Members' ICT with the aim of reducing costs and simplifying its use and that all Councillors be encouraged to utilise the systems available to them.
  - (viii) That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease as soon as practicable and that appendices to reports are not customarily printed but available electronically, on request and in the Members Library.
3. That the following Cabinet recommendations be approved for implementation for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.
  - (i) That the size of all committees / forums established / reappointed after May 2012 reflect the reduction in the overall size of Council.
  - (ii) The Mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated



savings in line with the parameters set out in legislation and the Constitution.

## 2. What are the reasons for calling-in this decision?

Call-in must only be used in exceptional circumstances and the justification for the call must be either: Please tick as appropriate

- that the decision or proposed decision is outside the Budget and Policy Framework ✓
- that the decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in Article 13 of the Constitution ✓

### Budget and Policy Framework:-

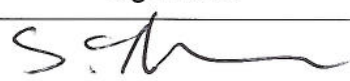
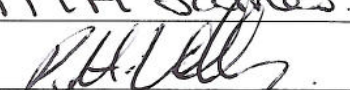
- i) Decision 2(v) – Reason: The intimation received from cabinet members in relation to this decision is that it is intended to be active from April 2012 however the Mayor has already issued instructions that the pending meeting of NAC and the associated attendance arrangements be cancelled.

The decision relating to conference attendance is contrary to the Council decision and current budget (e.g. the Council has appointed 3 delegates to the National Association of Councillors and a budget to enable them to participate in the groups work).

### Principles of Decision Making:-

The decision(s) taken by Cabinet, as detailed above, contravene the principles of decision making as detailed below: **Reasons see attached**

- i) Proportionality - Decision 2 (i-iii and v) 3 (i and ii)
- ii) In accordance with the constitution - Decision 1 (i-vi)
- iii) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers - Decision 1 (i-v) 3 (i)
- iv) Respect for human rights and equality - Decision 2 (i, iv and v)
- v) Best value - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (v) 3 (ii)
- vi) A presumption in favour of openness - Decision 1 (i-vi) 2 (iii) 3 (i and ii)
- vii) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (iii and v)
- viii) Due consideration of options available to the decision taker - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i-viii) 3 (1 and ii)
- x) Subsidiarity (i.e. delegation of decisions to the most appropriate level) - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i - v) 3 (i)
- xi) Efficiency (i.e. decisions must not be unnecessarily delayed) - Decision 3 (ii)
- xii) Reasonableness - Decision 1 (i-v) 2 (i - vi) 3 (i and ii)

	Position and Party Group	Signature
1. STEPHEN THOMAS	CHAIR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY - LABOUR GROUP	
2. MARJORIE JAMES	CHAIR OF SCC LABOUR GROUP.	MA James.
3. RAY WELLS	GROUP LEADER CONSERVATIVES.	

NB. Each of the Scrutiny Chairs may initiate call-ins providing they have the support of at least two members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. The three signatories must represent at least two of the Council's political groups.

Councillor: MA JAMES.

Signed: MA James.

Date: 18th Nov 2011

### For office use only

Date received:

Initials:

SCC Agenda:



## Reasons for Call In:-

1. That the following Cabinet recommendations be forwarded to scrutiny for its view with a report coming back to Cabinet prior to Christmas 2011.

- (i) That the constitution be reviewed annually through the Monitoring officer and that the Constitution Committee be abolished, following the 2012 elections.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

- (ii) That the functions of the Standards Committee be extended to include monitoring attendance of Members at induction and training sessions.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

- (iii) That the General Purposes (Appeals and Staffing) become a standalone committee with a fixed membership.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

- (iv) That the remaining General Purposes Committee functions be combined with the functions of the Audit Committee to form one expanded "Operations Committee", with exclusively backbench membership.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

- (v) That the Contract Scrutiny Committee be abolished and the functions relating to contracts/tenders be undertaken by the executive.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

### **General Comment**

*There is also the fact that within the time-frame (before Christmas, which means by Cabinet of 19th December) it is not possible for SCC to deal with the matters referred to it without setting up additional meetings to do so. This is placing an unfair burden on Scrutiny Staff and members who are already involved in a full work programme and Budget matters.*

- (vi) That the number of Scrutiny forums be reduced from six to four through the merging of neighbourhood services and regeneration and planning forums and Health to be combined with Adult Services to reflect the council's new public health role.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

*As this matter does directly affect Scrutiny we will arrange appropriate meeting time to enable us to form a view, however we would still expect to be able to participate fully in the deliberations of the joint working group as outlined above.*

2. That the following Cabinet recommendations be implemented forthwith;

- (i) That Members' Seminars be deleted from the council diary and replaced with ad hoc briefing / training sessions, to be organized following identification of issues by Members/Officers and be held immediately in advance of meetings of full Council.

*Cabinet is already aware that the deletion of diarised seminars has the full consent of Councillors across the political spectrum. There does however need to be some discussion as to the actual start time for "immediately in advance of meetings of full Council" as all political groups already meet prior to Council this could cause difficulties for members who have work commitments or caring responsibilities and should be discussed by Council before such a decision is implemented.*

- (ii) That the introduction of Task and Finish / Working Groups be monitored to ensure they are resourceable.

*Task and Finish/Working Groups are in a general sense formed in order to permit members to deal with a large piece of work which would take up more than one formal meeting.*

- (iii) That task and finish groups be conducted in public, except where the information being discussed is exempt under the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

*To conduct Task and Finish/Working Groups in public would defeat the objective of having the same, because they are not in public they do not require the 7 days statutory notice so allowing members to move large amounts of business quickly, they then report back their findings into a formal meeting which is open to the public in most cases. The introduction of Statutory Notice periods and diary arranging would result in additional work for Democratic Services and other officers not reduce it. It would also raise the question as to why Cabinet would wish to instigate a removal of the right of non-executive members to meet in this way whilst retaining for themselves Cabinet's "briefings" which now take up significant amounts of Senior Officer time each fortnight.*

- (iv) That Committee / Forum / Group Chairs be made advised of their responsibility in ensuring that only those additional meetings that are unavoidable are called in



light of the additional workload the number of additional meetings over and above the agreed Council Diary are creating.

*Members are well aware of the additional burden that extra meetings place on officers however they also increase their own burden when asking for such meetings so it is unlikely that they do this without there being a clear reason for doing so.*

- (v) That a 'freeze' to be introduced in respect of attendance at conferences where conference costs are incurred. In exceptional circumstances that attendance at conference is justified, the Member attending the Conference is required to feedback to all Members of the Council in both written and verbal form.

*This decision is flawed, it has the effect of preventing learning amongst members and the opportunity for members to receive a wider view which in most cases increases their self esteem and confidence.*

*When Scrutiny members attend conferences or seminars/learning events outside of the immediate locality, they already report back to their relevant forum and therefore to SCC and Council via the minutes. To formalise reports and circulate them in the way suggested will surely take up more officer time and also expend resources such as stationery and printing.*

- (vi) That a review of Members accommodation be undertaken involving all Councillors based on the principle of need.

*This is a recurring theme undertaken every 3 years or so, there is already minimal space provided for members, it would be difficult to reduce it much beyond its current arrangements.*

- (vii) That further consideration be given to improving Members' ICT with the aim of reducing costs and simplifying its use and that all Councillors be encouraged to utilise the systems available to them.
- (viii) That the practice of producing summary sheets for reports cease as soon as practicable and that appendices to reports are not customarily printed but available electronically, on request and in the Members Library.

- 3. That the following Cabinet recommendations be approved for implementation for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.

- (i) That the size of all committees / forums established / reappointed after May 2012 reflect the reduction in the overall size of Council.

*There is already a joint working group of Constitution Committee and General Purposes looking at the potential structure of Council and its Committees post May 2012 in order to report to Council so that a decision can be made. Therefore, for SCC to now spend time looking at the same issues would be a duplication of both member/officer time and the general resources within the Council.*

*However the above decision infers a pro-rata reduction which in some cases may reduce current arrangements beneath the legal requirements.*

- (ii) The Mayor to consider the potential options for the size of the Cabinet and any associated savings in line with the parameters set out in legislation and the Constitution.

*"Consider?" Council requires a clear timetable and direction of travel if it is to set a budget.*