



**AGENDA ITEM: 4**

## **AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL**

**15 November 2007**

### **THE FUTURE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF COUNCIL MEETINGS**

#### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To initiate discussion relating to the structure and content of Council meetings.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. The present structure of Council meetings has gradually developed over the years. However, some of the major changes have occurred during the past decade, as a result of the 1998 White Paper *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, and the subsequent Local Government Act 2000. Amongst many other changes, the White Paper and the Act led to the introduction of Scrutiny, directly elected Mayors, and the new roles of Council and the Executive.
3. The last major changes to Council procedural rules were agreed in May 2006 and included broadening the scope of questions without notice, the submission of petitions to Council, relaxing the rules relating to receiving and considering announcements from the Chair, and changing the order of business of Council meetings
4. At a recent meeting of the Constitution Committee, Members expressed the view that further improvements could be made to Council meetings. The aims of any proposals for change should be shorter and more focussed Council meetings, and further encouraging full participation and debate by all Members in Council meetings.
5. It was felt that a number of ideas might be worth discussion and consideration. These included reviewing those agenda items that must be included in every Council meeting; the possibility of alternating Mayor's question time and Executive question time; whether there might be merit in quarterly or half-yearly meetings focussing on the work and findings of Scrutiny; and so on.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

6. It is recommended that the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel undertakes a full and considered debate on possible options for the future form and structure of Council meetings, which might include the issues contained in the above paragraph, and reports its recommendations to Constitution Committee for consideration.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.