

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

18 DECEMBER 2007

OUTCOME OF AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

Re :-

EXECUTIVE SCHEME of DELEGATION

(Re Executive & Individual Executive decisions)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To report the outcome of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel held on 15th November 2007, regarding their findings on the application of the Executive Scheme of Delegation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2 The OSB directed the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to address the Executive Scheme of Delegation. Consequently the Panel met on the 15th November 2007 where it examined information derived from Executive and Individual Executive meetings which would inform the Panel on issues which are presented to Executive Members for decision.

PANEL FINDINGS

- 3 The Panel recognised that there are benefits in having a process, which expedites decision making. The Panel also appreciates that the facility to delegate decisions to individual Executive Members will positively contribute to this process.
- 4 The Panel found that for the above to be effective, it is essential that all members are aware of the issues being raised and have the opportunity to attend and comment as considered appropriate. The process by which elected member (and the public) can get information about future decisions is through the Forward Work Programme which identifies key decisions for four months in advance of the decision being taken. Although the Forward Work Programme is now much improved, at the time of writing (December 2007) there is only one decision identified for March 2008 and none for April 2008.

- 5 In relation to Individual Executive Meetings, the Panel has concerns that the process of decision making has become fragmented. An increasing amount of significant business has been transacted at meetings of Individual Executive Members rather than at meetings of the full Executive Board: in 2006-07, there were 62 decisions taken at the Executive (of which 18 related to scrutiny reports), while 177 decisions were taken at Individual Executive Meetings; in 2007-08 to date, there have been 23 decisions taken at Executive Board, with 62 taken at Individual Meetings.
- 6 Although many of the decisions taken at Individual Executive Meetings might be characterised as routine, technical or administrative, up to half were matters of significantly wider interest that would have benefited from exposure and debate at the Executive Board.
- 7 Given the way in which information is made available, it is often difficult for elected members to determine the nature and importance of items for decision. It is particularly difficult for members to attend numerous Individual Executive Meetings stretched across the month, thus impeding their responsibility for scrutiny of the Executive.

CONCLUSION

- 8 The Mayor has devolved a significant proportion of decisions to members of the Executive and many of these decisions are now taken in Individual Executive Meetings. An unintended consequence is that decision making is not as open and transparent as it might be. A distinction needs to be made between those decisions which are purely technical or administrative, or which are urgent, which can be dealt with at Individual Executive Meetings, and those which are of a wider political and/or public interest which should be considered by the full Executive Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9 The Ad Hoc Panel presents the following recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.
 - i) That the Forward Work Programme is brought fully up-to-date as soon as possible.
 - ii) That only routine, administrative or technical decisions, or those which are urgent, are taken at Individual Executive Meetings.
 - iii) That, so far as possible, decisions of a wider political or public interest are taken by the Executive Board as a whole.
 - iv) That, subject to the ruling of the Chair, non-executive elected members are invited to comment on all issues for decision at the Executive Board.

**COUNCILLOR MICHAEL CARR
CHAIR OF THE AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Extract of reports presented to Executive and Individual Executive meetings
2006/07 and also 2007/08