



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

REPORT

17 January 2012

Subject Heading:

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL –
review of meeting arrangements**

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Policy context:

To review the arrangements for the
Annual Meeting

Financial summary:

There are no significant direct financial
implications

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellence in education and learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value and enhance the life of every individual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This report is submitted as requested by the Committee, to review the arrangements for the Annual Meeting of the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee **RECOMMEND** to the Council:

- 1 The changes, if any, to be proposed in the arrangements for the Annual Meeting of the Council.
- 2 That the conferment of civic awards be dealt with before the Leader's Statement.
- 3 That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make all consequential changes to the Council's Constitution.

REPORT DETAIL

Arrangements for the Annual Meeting

- 1 In January 2011, the Committee reviewed arrangements for the meetings of the Council. It was agreed, among other things, that the arrangements for the Annual Council should be changed.
- 2 For some years, it had been the practice for the Annual Meeting to be concerned solely with civic and "housekeeping" matters: the election of the Mayor, the conferment of civic awards, the appointment of Committees and their Chairmen etc, and receiving a statement relating to the work of the year ahead from the Leader.
- 3 Members were concerned that the absence of other, ordinary business from the Annual Meeting meant that there was a four month gap in dealing with such business, as Council did not otherwise meet between the end of March and the end of July.
- 4 It was therefore agreed that the Annual Meeting should revert to dealing with ordinary business as well as the business customarily dealt with at it and that, to facilitate doing so, the meetings should start at 7pm rather than 7.30pm, with a break between "Annual Meeting" business and ordinary business.
- 5 In the event, the volume of ordinary business presented at the Annual Meeting this year was such that it was not possible to move to the debate of Members' motions until after 10pm, leaving insufficient time in some Members' view to ensure that a proper debate would follow. Those motions were therefore withdrawn and debated, in amended forms, at the July meeting.
- 6 At its meeting in September 2011, the Committee agreed to look again at the Annual Meeting arrangements and this report is submitted accordingly.

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- 7 The holding of the Annual Meeting is a statutory requirement. It is the meeting at which the Mayor must be elected and, customarily, other appointments are dealt with. It tends to be more of a civic event than other Council meetings.
- 8 It was agreed when the Annual Meeting arrangements were reviewed that meetings would start at the earlier time of 7pm. Unlike ordinary meetings, the Council Procedure Rules allow Annual Meetings to continue indefinitely, until all business is finished. That does not preclude the Mayor deciding, as a matter of principle, that once the meeting has been going for some time it might be appropriate to shorten the time allowed for debate.
- 9 There are several options that the Committee may wish to consider:
- To hold an ordinary meeting a short time following the Annual Meeting, say by no later than mid-June: this could be done by -
 - convening two separate meetings: the Annual Meeting for civic business only, and a subsequent ordinary meeting
 - convening the Annual Meeting with ordinary business and adjourning (to a pre-arranged date) at some convenient point during the meeting, determined at the time
 - convening the Annual Meeting with ordinary business and adjourning (to a pre-arranged date) at a specific point in the meeting, such as on completion of the civic business and Leader's statement(there are no obvious risks to these possible approaches but there would clearly need to be agreement as to when the second meeting would take place).
 - To leave the arrangements as they are: there would continue to be a mixture of "Annual Meeting", civic business and ordinary business. The risk would be that the amount of business likely to need to be transacted would require the meeting to continue until a very late hour.
 - To revert to the previous practice of having no ordinary business at the Annual Meeting, with the meetings either side, as now, in March and July (the risk then being that there would be a four-month gap between successive meetings for ordinary business).
 - To revert to the previous practice of having no ordinary business at the Annual Meeting but to put the March meeting back to, say, mid-April, and bring the July meeting forward to early in that month. That would reduce the gap between meetings by a month or so, although the gap between the January meeting and the next would increase from two months to around two and a half to three months and there would also be a greater gap between the July and September meetings.
- 10 The Committee is requested, therefore, to indicate what (if any) change in the Council's Constitution it wishes to propose to Council.

Conferment of civic awards

- 11 The Council Procedure Rules (CPRs) provide for the conferment of civic awards at certain meetings. Other than in the year of municipal elections, the Council is invited to consider the conferment of the Honorary Freedom of the Borough at the Annual Meeting. The CPRs currently specify that this be done as part of the ordinary business of the Council, following the completion of the civic business and receipt of the Leader's Statement.
- 12 The conferment of the Honorary Freedom is, however, clearly a civic matter rather than one for ordinary business and, accordingly, it is suggested that the order of business at the Annual Meeting be altered, so that the conferment is dealt with immediately before the Leader's Statement.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Human resources implications and risks

No implications or risks for human resources arise from this report.

Equalities implications and risks

No implications or risks for equalities arise from this report

Information and Communications Technology Implications

No implications or risks for ICT arise from this report.

Financial implications and risks

The current cost of servicing Council meetings is met from within existing resources. No significant financial implications or risks are expected as a result of this report.

Legal implications and risks

The Council has a statutory obligation to meet in May for the Annual Meeting. Noting in the report departs from that.

The format and conduct of Council meetings is a matter within the Council's control.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers