



GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Review of Annual Council arrangements

CMT Lead:

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Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

To review arrangements for the Annual Meeting of the Council to determine whether recent changes are to be recommended for permanent use

Financial summary:

The cost of any change would be minimal

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been carried out?

Not required.

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

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This report invites consideration of future arrangements for the Council's Annual Meeting in the light of recent experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 For consideration as to the arrangements to be made for the Annual Meeting for 2013:
 - (a) Retain the current Council Procedure Rules arrangements, as agreed for 2011;
 - (b) Amend the Council Procedure Rules to provide for an arrangement similar to that used in 2012; or
 - (c) Revert to the arrangements in use prior to 2011.
- 2 Irrespective of the decision on 1 above, for consideration as to whether (except in the year of an election of Councillors), the civic Awards should be conferred at an extraordinary meeting held immediately before the Annual Meeting.
- 3 That a report as to the steps necessary to implement the Committee's decisions on 1 and 2 above be submitted to the next meeting.

REPORT DETAIL

Introduction

- 1 At its meeting in January last year, the Committee considered a report about the format of the Annual Meeting of Council. Changes to the Annual Meeting arrangements in 2011, with the aim of enabling ordinary business as well as the traditional ceremonial business to be dealt with, had not been as successful as had been hoped. It was recommended to the Council – and subsequently agreed – that, for 2012, there should be an Annual Meeting in May, with business limited to the formalities of electing the Mayor and appointing Committees and their Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, etc, to be followed in June by an additional meeting at which the business of an ordinary meeting would be dealt with.
- 2 Among the aims of this arrangement was separating the formal civic and ceremonial business of the Annual Meeting from that of an ordinary meeting, while bridging the otherwise lengthy gap between ordinary meetings in March and July.
- 3 When setting the particular arrangements for these meetings, the Committee agreed that they should be reviewed subsequently, and this report is submitted accordingly.

Governance Committee, 16 January 2013

The 2012 arrangements

- 4 The Annual Meeting took until just short of 10pm, the business comprising:
 - Conferment of the honour of Honorary Freedom of the borough on two individuals (dealt with as an extraordinary meeting before the main meeting)
 - Election of the Mayor for 2012/13 and associated ceremonial activities
 - Appointing Committees
 - Appointing Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, and the Member Champions
 - A Statement by the Leader of the Council
- 5 The June meeting did not finish until 11pm. It dealt with:
 - A debate on the Leader's Statement to the Annual Meeting
 - Debate of a report (and amendment to it) on the new arrangements for the Members' Code of Conduct
 - Consideration of several reports (without debate)
- 6 Each of the debates at the June meeting took time to deal with, so that it was not possible to take Members' questions or to debate two motions. The debate on the Leader's Statement was not as structured as it might have been as no formal amendment was tabled to it.

Future arrangements

- 7 The Committee is now invited to consider what arrangements should be made for the Annual Meeting in 2013.
- 8 The practicable options appear to be:
 - (a) To retain the 2012 arrangements – the Annual Meeting in May confined to civic and ceremonial activities, plus the Leader's Statement, followed by an ordinary meeting in June
 - (b) To revert to the 2011 arrangements (as currently provided for in the Council Procedure Rules) – the civic and ceremonial activities, followed by the Leader's Statement and then in such time as remains, ordinary business
 - (c) To revert to the pre-2011 arrangements – an Annual Meeting comprising the civic and ceremonial activities, plus the Leader's Statement, but no other business, and no ordinary meeting between those in March and July.

- 9 There is a statutory obligation for the Council to hold an Annual Meeting and to elect the Mayor at it. Although there are certain legal formalities to be observed, it is not however strictly necessary for the ceremonial activities to take place; the Mayoral election could simply be conducted as just another item of business.

Conferring the Honorary Freedom of the Borough

- 10 Currently, the order of the agenda for the Annual Meeting places the awarding of Civic Honours as business to be conducted after the election of the Mayor. The Mayor for 2011/12 – Councillor Melvin Wallace – however, wished to present the Awards earned during his Mayoralty himself before his mayoralty ended, and so the Awards were dealt with at an Extraordinary meeting held in advance of the Annual Meeting; although convened as two separate meetings, they were conducted on the night as a single meeting.
- 11 There is a particular logic to Councillor Wallace’s request that could be a useful precedent for the future. The Committee may wish to consider whether (irrespective of other changes) it should become a permanent feature of the Council’s Annual Meeting arrangements in years other than those in which there is an election of Councillors (when different considerations apply), thus enabling the outgoing Mayor to preside over the conferment while still in office. In election years, the awards ceremony would have to take place after the Annual Council (currently, at the July meeting) since such Annual Meetings are inevitably more complex than other years’ and the newly-elected Groups will not have had time to consider who to nominate either for the Freedom, or as Honorary Aldermen.

Recommendations to Council

- 12 The recommendations of this report set out a range of options for the Committee to consider. Unless the Committee opts for the status quo of the current Council Procedure Rules, changes will be required. If changes are agreed, recommendations for revised Council Procedure Rules will be submitted to the next meeting for onward recommendation to the Council at its March meeting.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no significant financial implications. The cost of an additional Council meeting would be absorbed within existing budget provision.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications or risks. The holding of an additional meeting would facilitate the efficient conduct of the Council's business.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications or risks.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are no equalities implications or risks and Equalities Assessment has been necessary.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.