

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Review Title: Full Council Meetings**

### **A Review by the Corporate Issues & Partnerships (CIP) Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

#### **Background**

Bath & North East Somerset Council's 'Full Council Meeting' is the official assembly of all 65 Councillors. It normally meets bi-monthly in the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Bath. Meetings are run on more formal lines than some other public meetings within the Council and usually last from 6:30pm until around 10:00pm. It has a number of statutory obligations.

The Council adopted a modernised decision making process in 2002 by opting for a Council Executive and seven Overview & Scrutiny Panels. This new political structure is a progressive partnership and is becoming more established.

The Corporate Issues & Partnerships Panel has identified a need for the Council Meeting to be more engaging for all those involved and more relevant to the community of Bath & North East Somerset. They believe that the full gathering of Councillors has the potential to be used in a more effective and community focused way.

#### **Purpose**

The Purpose of this review will be to examine the role and the effective working of the Full Council meeting for Members, officers and the public, and make recommendations to the Council for changes. The Panel will not be reviewing the role of the Council.

In undertaking this review, the Panel is now taking the opportunity to examine the working arrangements and figure head role of the Full Council meeting. It is expected that the outcome of the review will reflect the ongoing and evolutionary changes that have been instigated through the modernisation process

The Panel agreed to undertake this review following discussion and recommendation by the Panel Chairman at a meeting of the Corporate Issues & Partnerships Panel on 25th November 2004.

#### **Objectives**

It is anticipated that the review will achieve:

- An improvement in the effectiveness, efficiency and perception of Full Council
- An increase the level of engagement and interest of Councillors, officers and members of the public at Full Council meetings.
- Changes to the role of Full Council

## *Appendix 1 Full Council Meetings Review. Terms of Reference*

- Guidelines for Councillors to encourage a change in individual behaviour and a culture change in Full Council operation. This will reflect culture improvements already seen in O&S and the Executive under the Modernisation agenda.

### **Scope**

The Panel will be looking at the following aspects of the full Council meeting:

1. The Role and perception of Full Council;
  - a. in determining policy
  - b. as community Leader
2. The Culture of Full Council;
  - a. Member conduct / officer involvement
  - b. The role of the Ward member
3. The Organisation of Meetings;
  - a. Location
  - b. The Physical Environment
  - c. The use of Technology
  - d. Frequency of meetings
  - e. layout and accessibility of agenda papers
4. The Content and Management of Meetings;
  - a. The role of the Chair of the Council
  - b. The Agenda order and timings

The Panel will not be considering the effectiveness of Overview & Scrutiny or the Executive arrangements, other than in the context of their respective relationship with Full Council

The Steering Group has specifically requested that this review is non-political.

### **Approach**

The Panel will undertake the following activities to gather information

1. Receive a briefing from the Head of Democratic Services
  - Giving background to the current role and working of full council
  - Highlighting what the Council's statutory obligations are (non-negotiables)
  - Outlining areas that could be options for development (negotiables)
  - Looking at Best Practice from other Authorities
  - Covering what work that has previously been done to improve Full Council
2. Research best practice
  - National parliamentary working or regional assemblies
  - Possible visit to national parliament, Welsh assemblies or other council's Full Council meetings
  - IDEA / Audit family / NUB
  - Ask Experts

## *Appendix 1 Full Council Meetings Review. Terms of Reference*

### 3. Consultation

- Ask issue to be debated at other O&S Panels and the Council Executive
- Questionnaire to all members
- Consult with public
- Consult with HoS and Directors Group

### 4. Workshop

- With panel, officers, previous Chairs of Council, Experts
- To explore issues and come up with innovative solutions

## **Outputs of this Review**

- Notes & papers from public CIP O&S Panel meetings.
- Short summary report incorporating key findings, conclusions and recommendations for Full Council.
- Send the report to the Local Government Association and to IDEA

## **Constraints**

- The review must be managed within the budget available to the Panel.
- The timescales of the review cross over the period leading up to a general election. During this time some Members are likely to be occupied by other responsibilities.

## **Project Team**

Corporate Issues & Partnerships O&S Panel:	Cllr. Martin Veal (Chairman) Cllr. Marie Brewer Cllr. Keith Kirwan Cllr. Tim Warren Cllr. Hattie Ajderian Cllr. Gail Coleshill Cllr. Gitte Dawson
Director:	Sarah Berry, Corporate Director
Head of Service	Graham Russell, Head of Democratic Services
O&S Project Manager:	Anna Burgess
Panel Administrator, Democratic Services:	Jack Latkovic

## **Review Steering Group**

Cllr. Martin Veal, Cllr. Keith Kirwan, Cllr. Hattie Ajderian, Graham Russell & Anna Burgess.

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**Draft Outline Project Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Stage / Activity</b>	<b>Meeting Type</b>
25 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	Panel agree to undertake review Steering Group set up	CIP Public Panel Meeting
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Steering Group agree Terms of Reference	Private meeting
January & Feb	CIP Full Council Review is discussed at each O&S Panel Best Practice Research undertaken	Public O&S Panel Meetings Private Activity
20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2005 (lead-in 11 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	Cllr Veal introduces Review at Full Council (3 minute speaking slot)	Full Council Public Meeting
3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb 2005 (lead-in 24 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	Panel publicly agree terms of reference	CIP Public Panel Meeting
Early Feb	Panel receive a briefing from Head of Democratic Services	Private Panel Meeting
Late Feb/March	Possible Panel visit to good example of large public meeting.	Private visit
March	Questionnaires sent to all Members	Private activity
10 <sup>th</sup> March 2005 (lead in 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb)		CIP Public Panel Meeting
17 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2005 (lead-in 8 <sup>th</sup> March)	Questionnaires available for all Councillors Chair requests councillors to fill in Questionnaires	Full Council Public Meeting
April	Questionnaire results Workshop held to discuss possibilities for change	Private workshop
19 <sup>th</sup> May (lead-in 9 <sup>th</sup> May)	Panel meet to debate findings and draw recommendations	CIP Public Panel Meeting
Early July	Possible Panel meeting to finalise report	Private Panel Meeting
14 <sup>th</sup> July (lead-in 5 <sup>th</sup> July)	Final report received and recommendations debated at Council	Full Council Meeting