

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	General Purposes Committee Council	Date:	17 October 2017 23 November 2017
Subject:	Amendments to Council Procedure Rules		
Report Of:	Head of Paid Service		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out options for amendments to the council's Council Procedure Rules, which form part of the Constitution.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to consider the options set out in the report and determine which, if any, should be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for approval.
- 2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that Council Procedure Rules be amended as follows:
- (1) That the start time for ordinary meetings of Council be changed to 6.30pm (Rule 5).
 - (2) That the length of Council meetings be limited to 3 hours unless extended by resolution of the meeting, with a two thirds majority of those in attendance required to close the meeting (Rule 6).
 - (3) That, with the exception of the proposer and seconder of a motion or amendment, speech times be limited to three minutes. This does not apply to debate on the annual budget (Rule 15.04).
 - (4) That a time limit of 10 minutes be introduced for Announcements (Rule 2.02).
 - (5) That a 'callover' be added to the order of business for ordinary meetings of Council (Rule 2.02).
 - (6) That a formal deadline of two hours prior to the start of the meeting be introduced for the submission of amendments to Notices of Motion (Rule 15.06) and amendments to be circulated at the start of the debate on the motion to which the amendment relates.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 At the request of the Chair of the General Purposes Committee, following feedback from a number of Members regarding the length of the Council meeting on 20 July 2017, this report provides options for revising the council's Council Procedure Rules to assist with the effective management of Council meetings.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 17 October, the General Purposes Committee (GPC) resolved to recommend that Council approve the amendments to Council Procedure Rules detailed below:

Meeting Start Time

- 3.3 Full Council is the only meeting in the formal calendar of meetings that begins at 7.00pm. As it also tends to be the longest meeting, Members should consider whether an earlier start time would be preferable. It is noted that some political Groups meet immediately prior to Council, however, it is also noted that some meet earlier in the week of the meeting. As other meetings begin at 6.00pm or 6.30pm, one of these times may be appropriate.

Option recommended by GPC: That the start time for ordinary meetings of Council be changed to 6.30pm (Rule 5).

Length of meeting

- 3.4 A 'guillotine' or limit on the duration of meetings is a common feature; indeed the Council has a two hour guillotine in place for some of its meetings, including the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In order to focus debate, Members should consider introducing a guillotine, which can be extended by resolution of the meeting.

Option recommended by GPC: That the length of Council meetings be limited to 3 hours unless extended by resolution of the meeting, with a two thirds majority of those in attendance required to close the meeting (Rule 6).

Content and Length of Speeches and Questions

- 3.5 GPC considered the length of Members' speeches at full Council meetings and determined that a limit of three minutes would be adequate, but that the mover and seconder of a motion or amendment should be afforded more time. Members also agreed that speech times for debate on the annual budget should not be affected.

Option recommended by GPC: That, with the exception of the proposer and seconder of a motion or amendment, speech times be limited to three minutes. This does not apply to debate on the annual budget (Rule 15.04).

Announcements

- 3.6 GPC noted that announcements from a number of individuals at the beginning of each meeting often took up a considerable amount of time and that perhaps announcements could be circulated on paper instead. Members concluded, however, that an opportunity for the some key announcements was important and therefore recommended imposing a time limit of 10 minutes.

Option recommended by GPC: That a time limit of 10 minutes be introduced for Announcements (Rule 2.02).

Substantive Agenda Items

- 3.7 The Council agenda generally comprises important Budget and Policy Framework items that Members are keen to debate before a decision is made. However, from time to time routine items must be included in the agenda because legislation or the Constitution requires a decision to be taken by the full Council; Members often choose not to debate such items after their introduction by the relevant Cabinet Member or Committee Chair. In order to focus meetings on the items that Members wish to debate, Members should consider the inclusion of a 'callover' at the start of the meeting. The purpose of a callover is for Members to consider which items should be reserved for discussion and which items can be approved without discussion. The list of substantive agenda items (reports) would be read out at the beginning of the meeting and Members would indicate if they would like to reserve items for discussion. Any items that are not reserved would automatically be approved as per the recommendations in the report.

Option recommended by GPC: That a 'callover' be added to the order of business for ordinary meetings of Council (Rule 2.02).

Amendments to Notices of Motion

- 3.8 Current practice in respect of amendments to Notices of Motion is that a request is made for them to be received by Democratic and Electoral Services two hours before the start of the meeting to enable sufficient copies to be made. Amendments are not circulated until they are tabled at the relevant point on the agenda, usually resulting in a short break while Members are given the opportunity to digest the content of the amendment. GPC agreed that amendments should be circulated at the beginning of debate on the motion to which the amendment relates to assist with the efficient transaction of the business and prevent undue delays. In order for this to work it would be necessary to formally distinguish between amendments to Notices of Motion and amendments to other motions within the Constitution and then introduce a formal deadline for the submission of amendments to Notices of Motion. It was noted that in practice a degree of flexibility would be required to enable discussion between political Groups.

Option recommended by GPC: That a formal deadline of two hours prior to the start of the meeting be introduced for the submission of amendments to Notices of Motion (Rule 15.06) and amendments to be circulated at the start of the debate on the motion to which the amendment relates.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 There are no ABCD implications as a result of this report.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 The General Purposes Committee considered and disregarded the following options:

1. That a limit of one Notice of Motion per Group per meeting be introduced (Rule 13) and provision be made that, where a Councillor is not a member of a Group, they may submit one Notice of Motion per meeting provided that they are able to secure the support of a seconder.
2. That a limit of two written questions per Member per meeting be introduced (Rule 12.02).
3. That a limit of 3 written questions per Group per meeting be introduced (Rule 12.02) and provision be made that, where a Councillor is not a member of a Group, they may submit one written question per meeting.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The options proposed are designed to assist with the efficient management of Council meetings. Council approval is required for any changes to Council Procedure Rules, which form part of the Council's Constitution.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 If approved by Council, any amendments to the Council Procedure Rules will come into effect immediately and the Constitution will be amended and re-published.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council Procedure Rules form part of the Constitution. Article 14.02(a) of the Constitution states that changes to the Constitution will only be considered by full Council upon consideration of a proposal prepared by the Head of Paid Service after consultation with the General Purposes Committee.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 There are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 There are no community Safety implications arising out of the recommendation in this report.

Sustainability

12.2 There are no sustainability implications arising out of the recommendation in this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 There are no Staffing and Trade Union implications arising out of the recommendation in this report.

Background Documents: None