



GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MEETING : Tuesday, 17th October 2017

PRESENT : Cllrs. Williams (Chair), H. Norman (Vice-Chair), Hilton, Taylor, Coole, Pullen and Morgan

Others in Attendance

Jon McGinty, Managing Director
Tanya Davies, Policy and Governance Manager
Parvati Diyar, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Hanman

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Committee noted the appointments made by Annual Council of Councillor Williams as Chair and Councillor H Norman as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions and deputations.

6. AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Paid Service which proposed options for amendments to the council's Council Procedure Rules, which formed part of the Constitution.

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The report had been produced at the request of the Chair, following feedback from a number of Members regarding the length of the Council meeting held on 20 July 2017 and provided options to assist with the effective management of Council meetings.

The Chair advised that the proposed options were designed to assist with efficient management of Council meetings and the recommendations put forward by the Committee would be presented to Council for approval.

Meeting Start Time

The Chair advised the Committee that the Conservative Group had met and agreed to propose that the start time for meetings of Council be changed to 6.30pm (Rule 5).

She noted that some political Groups met prior to the day of the Council meeting and that there was adequate time for all Group meetings to take place further in advance.

Councillor Hilton advised that he had consulted with the Liberal Democrats Group and they would object to the proposal of an earlier start time. He explained that members of the Group would have difficulties attending Council meetings at an earlier start time due work commitments and travel time. He added that an earlier start time would not allow Members adequate time to have food/refreshments prior to the meeting. He suggested that the option of providing sandwiches, through a deduction from Members' allowances could be explored.

He also highlighted his view that a number of individuals had stood as candidates on the understanding that Council meetings would take place at 7.00pm.

Councillor Pullen commented that the Labour Group would also not support the proposal of an earlier start time. He added that a number of Members did not finish work until 5.30pm and an earlier start time would not be practical for his Group.

Councillor H Norman pointed out that all other Committees had an earlier start time and individuals would have been aware of this when they had been elected.

The Chair acknowledged Councillor Hilton's comments.

It was agreed that the Policy and Governance Manager would investigate the costs for refreshments to be deducted from Members' allowances.

Councillor Hilton pointed out that the County Council held a Chair's briefing and suggested that Group Leaders and the Mayor discuss items on the agenda prior to the meeting.

The Committee agreed to recommend that the start time for ordinary meetings of Council be changed to 6.30pm.

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Length of meeting

The Chair advised that the Conservative Group had proposed that the length of Council meetings be limited to 3 hours, with the option to vote to extend the time if necessary.

Councillor Pullen commented that the majority of Council meetings were approximately 3 hours and the previous meeting was exceptionally long due to the contributions made by Members. He added that in order to manage the process of Council meetings, some areas could be condensed. He commented that announcements took a substantial amount of time and questioned whether this was necessary.

He further suggested that the content of the agenda could be better managed if Group Leaders met with the Mayor to discuss agenda items before the meeting.

Councillor Hilton echoed Councillor Pullen's comments and stated that all 3 political parties had a responsibility to ensure major issues were given sufficient time to debate.

Councillor H Norman believed a guillotine approach would improve the meeting and ensure Members focused on appropriate Council business on the agenda. She commented that the Mayor could bring the guillotine to Members' attention after 2 hours.

Councillor Coole commented that a guillotine was in place for Overview and Scrutiny Committee, while Councillor Taylor believed a guillotine approach would shorten the meeting.

The Managing Director commented that any Member could propose that the debate be moved on by moving a motion that 'the question be now put'.

Councillor Taylor suggested a guillotine should be extended by resolution of the meeting, with a two thirds majority required to close the meeting.

It was noted that the Mayor could propose to move to the vote if an item had been sufficiently debated.

Following discussions, the Committee recommended that the length of Council meetings be limited to 3 hours, with two thirds of those present required to close the meeting.

Substantive Agenda Items

The Committee agreed to recommend that a 'callover' be added to the order of business for ordinary meetings of Council (Rule 2.02), to enable routine items to be agreed with debate.

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Notices of Motion

The Chair advised that she would be recommending for each political Group to submit 2 motions, with a provision for emergency motions to be considered.

Councillors Pullen and Hilton commented that both the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group would not support restrictions on motions which would subsequently limit debate.

Councillor Hilton said he had examined this and advised that there had been no more than 4 motions submitted to Council in recent times. He added that if Council meetings were to be limited to 3 hours, announcements taken out and the draft agenda circulated to Members in advance, the number of motions submitted and debated should be manageable.

Councillor Coole shared his concerns and said this would create fewer opportunities for the political Groups to present their debate on important issues.

The Managing Director suggested the Committee consider an alternative option of reducing speech time limits. At present the length of speeches were 5 minutes, but could be limited to 3 minutes.

The Committee discussed this option and agreed to recommend that with the exception of the proposer and seconder of a motion or amendment, speech times be limited to 3 minutes, except at the Annual Budget meeting.

Amendments to Notices of Motion

The Chair advised that the current practice in respect of amendments to Notices of Motion was that, through an informal arrangement, these are presented to Democratic and Electoral Services 2 hours before the start of the meeting to ensure sufficient copies are made.

Councillor Hilton commented that at present, simple verbal amendments such as factual corrections, can be presented as an amendment to a motion at any time.

The Committee noted that it would be necessary to differentiate between amendments to Notices of Motion and amendments to other motions.

Councillor H Norman commented that some flexibility would be required for Groups to discuss amendments and the Managing Director advised that the Chair would be able to use his/her discretion to accept amendments received after the deadline.

Following discussions, the Committee agreed to recommend that a formal deadline be introduced and that amendments should be circulated at the start of discussion on the motion to which the amendment relates.

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Written Questions to Cabinet Members

The Committee agreed to recommend that no changes were required.

General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) That the start time for ordinary meetings of Council be changed to 6.30pm.
- (2) That the length of Council meetings be limited to 3 hours unless extended by resolution of the meeting (2/3 majority required to close the meeting).
- (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.
- (4) That a time limit of 10 minutes be introduced for Announcements.
- (5) That a 'callover' be added to the order of business for ordinary meetings of Council.
- (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 the debate on the motion to which the amendment relates. (deadline to administered with some flexibility).

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 16 January 2018 at 6.00pm

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours
Time of conclusion: 7.05 pm hours

Chair