

## MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016/2017 REPORT NO. 17

### MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Council – 8th June 2016

### REPORT OF:

Director of Finance Resources &  
Customer Services

<b>Agenda – Part: 1</b>	<b>Item: 9</b>
<b>Subject: Reference from Members &amp; Democratic Services Group: Review of Council Procedure Rules</b>	
<b>Cabinet &amp; Other Members consulted: n/a</b>	

Contact: Asmat Hussain (020 8379 6438)

E mail: [Asmat.Hussain@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:Asmat.Hussain@enfield.gov.uk)

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of a review of the structure and operation of full Council meetings and associated changes recommended to the Council Procedure Rules (CPRs), which has been undertaken by Member & Democratic Services Group (MDSG).
- 1.2 The review has been focussed around the way in which Council meetings can be more effectively managed in order to make proceedings clearer and more relevant to members of the public and press.
- 1.3 This report outlines the key areas of focus under the review and changes to the CPRs, for formal consideration and adoption within the Constitution by Council. The proposed changes have been detailed in tracked format within the amended CPRs attached as Appendix 1.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to consider and formally approve, for inclusion as part of the Constitution, the changes proposed to the CPRs, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report which will apply from the next (July 16) Council meeting onwards.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The review undertaken by MDSG commenced in February 2015, with members keen to consider how full Council meetings were currently structured and were operating in practice. The aim behind the review was to look at ways in which Council meetings could be made more effective, both in terms of how business was conducted and how proceedings could better engage both the public and press.
- 3.2 As a starting point, MDSG identified a number of key roles for the full Council meeting, which were highlighted as follows:
- (a) To celebrate civic life e.g. Mayoral announcements, presentations, Mayor Making and Freedom of the Borough ceremonies.
  - (b) To take major decisions and deal with those issues reserved by law to full Council.
  - (c) To hold the Executive to account.
  - (d) To provide information to the public and councillors on major developments/issues impacting on the borough; and
  - (e) To express a collective view as a Council, representing the local community within Enfield.
- 3.3 In terms of the scope for the review, Members were keen to focus on the following areas:
- (a) How Council meetings could be made more accessible to the public and press, recognising the difficulty in following procedures around debates.
  - (b) How the quality and structure of debates, motions and questions could be improved in order to open up the meeting whilst also ensuring proper accountability in terms of the way that the Executive could be held to account.
  - (c) The current role and operation of Council Questions and Motions and need to ensure that the Opposition, in terms of holding the Executive to account, were also seen to be acting responsibly.
  - (d) The need to maintain the ability during debates at Council to be able to articulate differing political views on local issues of concern, which was seen as a valuable and legitimate democratic role for Council.

- 3.4 MDSG has, over the course of its review considered a number of proposed changes to the way in which Council meetings could be more effectively structured and business conducted. A series of updated CPRs have been presented to the Group for review which have been subject to consultation with both political groups.
- 3.5 The final package of measures was presented to MDSG on 21 April 2016 and as a result of the discussions at that meeting it was agreed the proposed changes should be referred to Council for formal consideration.
- 3.6 Key points in the revised proposals are noted below:
1. There will be a strictly timed agenda (on the understanding that a motion to adjust the timings can be moved during the meeting). The Administration will set out the agenda timings when the agenda is published (having consulted the opposition).
  2. There will be tighter time limits on speeches. These will be 5 minutes first speakers, 3 minutes others, 2 minute right of reply, in order to allow as many members to speak as possible.
  3. To tighten the timetable for questions and responses so they are as up to date as possible. Questions will have to be in by noon 9 calendar days before the meeting and answers will be published on the working day before the meeting.
  4. There shall be a limit of 20 questions per party group and one question each for independent councillors
- 3.7 Whilst it has been possible to achieve consensus between the political groups on a significant proportion of the proposed changes, the Leader of the Opposition has advised that his group remain keen to see Council Questions moved up the order of business so they are taken as one of the first items on future Council agendas. MDSG noted that this had not been accepted by the Majority Group, on the basis that the Mayor could, if felt necessary, agree to move questions up the agenda at specific meetings. The Majority Group did not feel this process needed to be formalised for all meetings and the package of changes has therefore been referred on to Council for consideration on this basis.
- 3.8 Council is now being asked to consider the package of measures identified by MDSG and, if minded, to formally approve the changes to the Council Procedure Rules (as outlined within Appendix 1) for inclusion as part of the Constitution on the basis they will become effective from the July 16 Council meeting onwards.
- 3.9 Subject to any decision made, officers will provide more detailed guidance for members on the practical implementation of the changes agreed.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Do nothing – MDSG did not feel this was a viable option given the need identified to look at how Council meetings could be made more effective, both in terms of how business was conducted and how proceedings could better engage both the public and press.

#### **5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To update and amend the CPRs to reflect the outcome of the review undertaken by MDSG and the aim of making full Council meetings more effective and engaging, in terms of how business is conducted.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

##### **6.1 Financial Implications**

None – the changes required to the Constitution and practical implementation of them, along with any further guidance for members will be delivered within existing resources.

##### **6.2 Legal Implications**

The changes being proposed to the CPRs are in accordance with the Council's statutory requirements; pursuant to section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2089).

#### **7. KEY RISKS**

The changes being recommended to the way in which full Council will operate have been designed to ensure that future meetings are managed in as effective a way as possible whilst also making proceedings more accessible for key stakeholders such as local residents and the press.

#### **8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

##### **8.1 Fairness for All & Strong Communities**

The changes to the CPRs have been designed to increase accessibility and openness in relation to the Council's political management arrangements and way in which full Council functions.

#### **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

It has not been necessary to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment in relation to this proposal.

## **10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The changes introduced to the Council's governance and decision making procedures have been designed to assist the Council in managing its business in as efficient and effective a way as possible.

## **11. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific public health implications arising from the proposals within this report.

## **Background Papers**

None