

**DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS FORUM  
MONDAY, 9 JUNE 2008**

**In attendance:** Councillor R A Bibby (in the Chair)  
Councillors Campbell, Creswell, Pickstone and Walton;  
and Mrs A Brown (Independent Chair of the Standards  
Committee)

**Officers:** M Sanders – Chief Executive  
J Hammond – Director of Legal and Democratic  
Services  
D Hanson – Head of Democratic Services

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2008/2009**

**It was agreed:**

That Councillor Bibby be appointed Chair for 2008/2009.

**2. QUESTIONS AT MEETINGS FROM COUNCILLORS AND THE PUBLIC**

In line with the decision of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 14 May 2008, (Minute C.08), consideration was given to that part of the report by the Leader of the Council relating to questions at meetings, which had been referred to this Forum for further discussion. A copy of the Leader's report to Council and the report on Public Question Time at meetings submitted to this Forum on 21 November 2006, had been circulated to all Forum Members.

The proposals in the report to be considered at this meeting are:-

**Public Questions at Meetings**

- (a) Public questions for Council be submitted in writing to the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) five clear working days prior to the meeting. No supplementary questions to be asked.
- (b) Public questions for the Executive will be allowed at the discretion of the Chairman.
- (c) Public involvement at Scrutiny Commissions, Licensing, Standards and Planning remain the same.

**Questions by Members**

- (a) All questions asked at Council by Members be received in writing by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) five clear working days prior to the meeting, with one supplementary question arising out of the same issue allowed at the discretion of the Mayor.

- (b) It is also proposed that any one Member may ask up to two questions on different subjects at Council meetings. There will be a 20 minute time limit on this part of the Council proceedings.
- (c) Questions (which may be verbal) on the work of the Executive, to be in addition to written questions, but limited to one per Councillor, subject to the discretion of the Mayor, and to be limited in total to 20 minutes.
- (d) Questions at the Executive relating to items on the agenda may be submitted by a Ward Councillor provided the question relates specifically to his/her Ward. The question should be submitted to the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) three working days prior to the Executive meeting. One supplementary question may be asked relating to the written question at the discretion of the Chairman.

Councillor Pickstone indicated that he would be in favour of encouraging members of the public to present their questions in writing but would recommend that oral questions be allowed.

Councillor Campbell considered that the current arrangements under which members of the public can ask questions verbally at Council, required Executive Portfolio holders to be fully briefed on their respective Portfolios. He did not consider that requiring questions from the public to be submitted in writing prior to the meeting, would remove the 'political' questions asked at meetings.

## **ACTIONS**

1. Following a full debate and exchange of views, these were the agreed actions to be undertaken in preparation for a report to be submitted to the Council at its meeting to be held on 25 June 2008:-

### **(i) Questions from Members of the Public at meetings**

- The Leader to reconsider the deadline of five clear working days prior to the Council meeting date for the submission of written questions by members of the public.

### **(ii) Questions from Councillors at meetings**

- The Leader to reconsider the deadline of five clear working days prior to the Council meeting date for the submission of written questions by Councillors.
- The Leader to consider the proposal that a time limit of up to 30 minutes be set for the answering of written questions on the work of the Executive at Council meetings.

### **(iii) Urgent Items of Business**

- The Leader to consider whether verbal questions by members of the public and Councillors on items of urgent business at the Executive/Council meetings, could be allowed at the discretion of the Chair/Mayor.

2. That the remaining proposals set out in the report now considered, be included in the Leader's report to Council on 25 June 2008.
3. That, in the event that these proposals are approved by Council on 25 June 2008, a review of their effectiveness be undertaken in October 2008.

**COUNCILLOR R A BIBBY**  
**Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 4.30 p.m. and ended at 5.55 p.m.)**