

CONSTITUTION IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

APPENDIX 3

Options for Governance		
1	That the present Leader and Cabinet system of governance be retained.	No direct cost implications
Executive Decision making		
2	<p>That, where PDS Committees and Portfolio Holders are in agreement, Portfolio Holders may make decisions without formal pre-decision scrutiny in the following categories and circumstances -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointments made by the Portfolio Holder where there is only one nominee; • Local schemes costing less than £35k which affect only one Ward, e.g.: minor highways schemes, where all Ward Councillors are in support of the proposal; • Contract extensions where there are no performance issues with the contractor and the contract includes a provision to extend; • Contract awards where there has been a gateway review and the award is proposed to be made to the most economically advantageous tenderer; • Contract waivers where the Portfolio Holder is required to agree single tender action; • Matters considered by the Executive where further action can appropriately be delegated to a Portfolio Holder; • Any other matter that the Portfolio Holder can decide under the Scheme of Delegation where there has been no objection from any Member of the relevant PDS Committee. 	No direct cost implications. There is some modest saving potential around agenda production and meeting costs.

	All these categories of decision will be subject to the Portfolio Holder circulating his proposed decision to all Members in advance by email as a “minded to” decision; any Member may request that a matter be referred to the relevant PDS Committee before a decision is taken.	
Area Committees		
3	The Working Group reports that there are mixed views on the issue of Area Planning Committees and makes no recommendation.	No direct cost implications (unless additional meetings result.)
Enhancing the Role of Full Council meetings		
4	That either the Leader or 9 Members of one recognised political group, or 5 Members across two political groups, be permitted to initiate a debate on any matter of local importance before full Council, prior to an Executive decision being taken.	If additional Council meetings are required there may be modest cost implications.
5	That the Director of Resources and Finance Director be instructed to undertake work to review the policy framework and financial thresholds for Council decision making, so that any changes may be implemented after the Annual Meeting in 2013.	
6	That Council should be the appropriate authority to consider major planning applications on the recommendation of the Development Control Committee or at the request of twenty Members of the Council.	
7	The Council’s e-petition facility be removed but the Petition Scheme otherwise continue un-amended.	
8	The scheme of public and Member questions be amended to allow supplementary questions on replies from members of the Council. The timing should remain at 30 minutes, subject to the Mayor’s discretion to extend the time.	

9	The prohibition on recording of meetings by members of the public be removed, subject to suitable disclaimers and a right for the meeting to demand that recording be stopped.	
10	Video cameras should be provided in the Council Chamber to allow the provision of vision as well as sound for overflow rooms.	A video link would cost in the region of £7,500 to £10,000.
11	Master recordings be made of full Council meetings.	Recordings of council meetings are possible at present.
Councillors IT		
12	<p>Further work should be undertaken by the New Technology Working Group to examine how Councillors can use new technology more effectively to achieve economies and efficiency as part of a wider assessment of Member support, examples being:</p> <p>(12.1) Encouraging a move from Council-financed fixed line phones and broadband across to mobile phones and use of Councillors' own broadband;</p> <p>(12.2) Trialling hand held/tablet devices as an alternative to hard-copy deliveries and extending the use of team sites (similar to that used to support this review) to make background portfolio information available on an on-going basis to Councillors rather than providing this only in "for information" agenda reports; and</p> <p>(12.3) Enhanced presentation facilities to support public access to Council meetings, such as better hearing loops in Civic Centre rooms.</p>	<p>In 2011/12, £16,094 was spent on fixed line telephone provision and broadband connections. Rental of mobile phones was £4,139. Further work is required to distinguish costs more precisely.</p> <p>The purchase cost of a basic Council mobile phone is about £30. Call charges for the 12 Members issued with them are under £50 per month in total.</p> <p>Stopping the weekly van delivery should save in the region of £12,000 pa. If printing costs were eliminated altogether this would save a further £10,000.</p>
13	Members elected before 2010 should be encouraged to switch away from Council provided landlines to mobile phones.	(See above)
14	Members should be allowed a monthly allowance for using their personal mobile phones rather than Council supplied equipment for Council business.	A reasonable level of allowance has yet to be determined.

15	Tablet computers should be provided to all Members from 2014 and paper delivery stopped.	(See above.)
16	Tablet computers should be provided on request for those members prepared to forgo printed agenda papers.	(See above)
17	Teleconferencing, skype and similar new technology approaches are endorsed for use at informal meetings wherever practical for those Members who are unable to be present and investigations be made into the legal issues for their use for more formal meetings.	No direct cost implications and potential for modest savings and efficiencies.
Freedom of Information		
18	All Freedom of Information questions and answers should be made available via the Council's website.	The Council's current FOI database does not upload questions and answers to the website, so there may be extensive development costs. Alternatively, FOI responses could be uploaded to existing departmental pages, but this would be resource intensive.
Councillor Numbers		
19	Work be initiated to secure a review of Councillor numbers in time for the 2018 election.	The Members Allowance currently stands at £10,872 pa each, or £652,320 in total. Removing ¼ of Council seats would save £163,080pa, plus savings from IT/telephone costs and other expenses.