

By: Gary Cooke, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services
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To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 27 November 2013

Subject: The Leader's Oral Report to the County Council

Summary: The Committee is invited to consider changing the Constitution in relation to the Leader's oral report to the County Council, as a consequence of the Council now having four Opposition Groups.

1. Introduction

1. (1) The Council's Constitution (Paragraph 1.19 of Appendix 4 Part 1) includes provision for the Leader to make an oral report to the County Council on key issues arising since the last meeting. The Leader may speak for up to ten minutes; other political group leaders may speak for up to seven minutes each; following which the Leader may respond for a further five minutes.

(2) The above procedure was drafted at a time when there were two Opposition Groups on the Council; therefore the total amount of time that the item could take at County Council meetings was 29 minutes. Now that the Council has four Opposition Groups, it is considered that the Leader's oral report could start to dominate the proceedings of the County Council in a way that was not intended when the procedure was drafted. If the Constitution was not altered, the total amount of time that could be taken for the Leader's oral report with four Opposition Group Leaders speaking would be 43 minutes, almost the same amount of time allocated in the Constitution to debate a petition containing 10,000 or more signatures or a Motion for Time Limited Debate.

2. Proposed alteration to the Constitution

(1) Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to invite the Committee to review and amend paragraph 1.19 of Appendix 4 Part 1 of the Constitution.

(2) One option to reduce the total amount of time for the Leader's oral report would be to restrict the number of speeches from other group leaders to two: the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the second largest Opposition Group. An alternative would be to alter the total amount of time that the four other Group Leaders have to make their speeches, which is more proportionate to the size of the groups they represent.

(3) In addition, it is proposed that the time allowed for the Leader to respond to the other Group Leaders' speeches should be increased from five to six minutes, to ensure that there is sufficient time to respond to the points made.

(4) It is recommended that with effect from the next meeting of the County Council in December 2013, paragraph 1.19(5) of Appendix 4 Part 1 be amended as follows:

“The Leader’s report shall not exceed ten minutes; his reply shall not exceed six minutes. The Leader of the Opposition may speak for up to six minutes; the Leader of the second largest Opposition Group may speak for up to five minutes; the Leader of the third largest Opposition Group may speak for up to four minutes; and the Leader of the fourth largest Opposition Group may speak for up to three minutes.”

4. Recommendation:

The Committee is invited to approve a change to paragraph 1.19(5) of Appendix 4 Part 1 of the Constitution in relation to the Leader’s oral report as set out in paragraph 2(1) above.

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Background Papers: None