

<b>Key Decision Required:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>In the Forward Plan:</b>	<b>No</b>
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## CABINET

12 JULY 2013

### REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

#### **A.3 ENGAGEMENT OF MEMBERS IN THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL**

(Report prepared by Martyn Knappett and Colin Sweeney)

#### **PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To enable Cabinet to consider potential ways for ward Members to be more aware of, and able to have input into, decisions which directly and specifically affect their ward.

To provide a wider review of the evolution and development of the Council's decision making arrangements and potential opportunities for Members to engage more in those processes.

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- At the meeting of the Cabinet, held on 13 September 2012, the then Leader of the Council, Councillor Neil Stock, announced that he wished Officers to bring forward a report to Cabinet outlining recommendations that would embed into the functioning of the Council the rights of local Ward Members to have a greater and more meaningful involvement in issues affecting their Ward where the Council was involved.
- This report suggests three possible means of doing so for consideration by Cabinet
  - Require Portfolio Holders to communicate with individual ward members before making a decision themselves which has a direct and specific impact on the member's ward and recording that the communication had taken place on the written record of the decision.
  - Require officers to consult local ward members when drawing up proposals to spend Section 106 monies and to explore the possibility of involving ward members when seeking to negotiate Section 106 agreements.
  - Explore the possibility (through the review of the Constitution) of introducing a process whereby a single ward Member could call in a decision which has a direct and specific impact solely on their ward.
- In addition, as current Leader I have asked officers to summarise some key changes in the way in which our decision making arrangements have changed and are changing and the opportunities these changes present for Members to get more involved.
- This report identifies changes in the following areas with opportunities for greater engagement by members highlighted for each.

- Cabinet and Portfolios
- Overview and Scrutiny
- The Locality Board (and other non decision-making boards).
- Miscellaneous

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 That Cabinet determines whether it wishes to implement any of the suggested enhanced opportunities for the engagement of ward members set out in this report.**
- 2 That Cabinet notes the on-going development of the Council's decision making arrangements and the increased opportunities for wider member engagement.**

## **PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

All of the proposals in this report aim to provide a more cohesive and efficient way of engaging all members in the work of the Council and delivering the Council's priorities in an efficient way whilst also reflecting each Member's democratic role.

### **FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK**

#### **Finance and Other Resources**

There are no apparent financial implications arising from this report.

#### **Risk**

There are no apparent risks arising from this report.

### **LEGAL**

There are no significant legal implications arising from this report.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

**Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.**

The proposals involve greater consultation and public engagement and will enhance members' community leader role.

## **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **CURRENT POSITION**

#### **PART 1 – ENGAGEMENT IN WARD ISSUES**

Three ways have been identified which would, if adopted, have the effect of increasing the awareness of ward members in issues directly and specifically affecting their wards and to be able to make their views known on behalf of the electors of their ward.

## Portfolio Holder Decisions

Where a Portfolio Holder is proposing to take a decision which has a direct and specific impact on one or more wards (as above) the Portfolio Holder could communicate with the relevant ward member(s) to seek their views on what is proposed. The fact that this communication had taken place could be recorded on the Executive Decision form.

## Spending proposals for S106 Monies

Ward Members could be specifically advised by officers when they are preparing proposals for agreement to spend Section 106 monies in their ward. The possibility of consulting ward members when officers are seeking to secure Section 106 agreements could also be explored.

## Call-in by Ward Members

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Corporate Governance, working with the Constitution Review Working Party could be asked to examine the possibility of amending the Call-In arrangements to allow an individual ward Member to call in a decision where it has a direct and specific impact on their ward.

For each of the first two proposals above the changed approach could be introduced with immediate effect without the need to change formal procedures but changes could be made where appropriate via the Constitution review later in the year.

## **PART 2 – RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND WIDER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### Cabinet

The size of the Cabinet has been reduced and new “Influencing” portfolios have been established to strengthen the Council’s community leadership role.

Portfolio Holder led working parties have been established and have met to address issues of economic development, the civic hub and the review of the Constitution.

Opportunities for wider engagement:-

- The invitation remains open for all group leaders to attend Cabinet meetings
- Participation in Portfolio Holder led working groups
- Feed ideas into the review of the Constitution.

### Overview and Scrutiny

There is an increased focus on seeking to ensure that the work of the overview and scrutiny committees is dovetailed and more co-ordinated with the work of the Cabinet and other parts of the Council to ensure that the Council’s overall resources are used efficiently. This needs to be done in such a way as not to undermine the independence of the overview and scrutiny function and their right to hold the executive to account and scrutinise its actions.

To this end there have been two meetings in the past few months between the Leader of the Council, the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and (at the second meeting) the Chairman of the Audit Committee.

The work programme for overview and scrutiny this year is more focussed than in previous years but this is an area where more focussed work should be carried out when the next work programme is prepared. The work programme can be added to or varied during the course of the year and any Member can suggest items for scrutiny.

The Corporate Management Committee has indicated that it will establish Working Parties to carry out some of its focussed scrutiny work this year.

The Cabinet has proposed that the Council's first "Council in Committee" debate should take place soon on the subject of how the council's overview and scrutiny arrangements and work can be improved. This will give all members an equal opportunity to participate in a debate on this important subject.

Opportunities for wider engagement:-

- Participate in working parties
- Propose items for scrutiny – in line with Council / Cabinet priorities where appropriate.
- Participate and put ideas forward in the "Council in Committee" debate (the first of its kind at Tendring).
- Undertake more innovative scrutiny – maybe with individual members leading on a particular issue on behalf of one of the Committees and in line with Council / Cabinet priorities where appropriate.

### Tendring Locality Board

Locality Boards help shape how we work together locally to transform public services and empower communities.

Tendring Locality Board's (TLB) role is to provide a high-level political steer to shape the future of the locality; to deliver a coordinated public service approach across a number of key County and District services and projects and enable joined-up delivery of key services with a wide range of partners.

In summary, the TLB aims to:

- Ensure value for money public service outcomes
- Enable closer collaboration between the various tiers of local government with a focus joining-up delivery and resources and doing things more efficiently
- Exert local influence over commissioning decisions affecting the Locality Board area

The TLB is one of six in Essex. It is non-budget holding and non-decision-making and, as it is a Board, is not bound by structures or reporting mechanisms and provides an opportunity for the County and District elected members to openly and robustly discuss issues impacting the Tendring District.

The TLB first met in September 2011 (with meetings held in private) when it was agreed that its primary focus would centre on:

- Improving educational attainment
- Better infrastructure and roads
- Improving health outcomes
- A sustainable coastal economy and
- To help individuals and communities to help themselves

It is suggested that the Health and Well-being Board and the Highways Panel continues to feed into the TLB since these are akin to the TLB's primary focus and will enable consideration of relevant issues at a higher, countywide level.

Following on from the success of the TLB, it agreed, amongst other things, at its meeting held on 7 June 2013, that future meetings would be held in public and minutes of these meetings will be published on the TDC website, thus enabling other interested members to attend and listen to the debate.

#### Miscellaneous

In addition to the above there are other opportunities for wider member engagement:

- Improved opportunities for members to speak at Planning Committee.
- A programme of regular all member briefings which are open to all and which cover a wide range of issues in an interactive manner where possible.
- As Leader I am prepared to meet with any member to discuss Council business – my door is open.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION**

There are no background papers relating to this report.