

Agenda Item No: **Report No:**

Report Title: **Structure of Full Council Meetings at Lewes District Council**

Report To: **Council** **Date:** **9 May 2012**

Cabinet Member: **Councillor James Page**

Ward(s) Affected: **All**

Report By: **Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services**

Contact Officer(s)-

Name(s): **Catherine Knight**
Post Title(s): **Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services**
E-mail(s): catherine.knight@lewes.gov.uk
Tel No(s): **01273 484118**

Purpose of Report:

To consider a range of options for inclusion in the structure of full Council meetings.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 That councillors examine the range of options as set out in section 3.
 - 2 That councillors identify which options set out in section 3 they wish to trial at full Council meetings.
-

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 To improve the structure of full Council meetings at Lewes District Council.

Information

- 2 Councillors from both the majority and minority groups have asked the Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services whether the structure of full Council meetings at Lewes District Council might be improved, in order that there is more space for debate, feedback and discussion. Officers were asked to research ideas from other authorities Council meetings and present a list of options for councillors to consider, as set out in section 3. Councillors could choose to trial and perhaps implement all, or just some of the options.

Options

- 3 **Reporting back on meetings of Outside Bodies**
A standing item could be added to the Council agenda in order that individual

members of the Council have an opportunity to present feedback to the full Council on previous meetings they have attended as official representatives on outside bodies. A time element could be added to this to ensure that oral reports are kept succinct. The Leader has suggested that councillors might similarly like to consider an option to give their feedback at Cabinet meetings, especially as there might be a long gap between the meeting of the outside body and the next scheduled council meeting.

State of the District Debate

Lewes District Council could hold an annual “State of the District Debate”. Crawley Borough Council and Adur District Council have held such events, and they have been whole day events containing workshops where members of the Council work together on specific issues. These workshops are on topics such as the Local Development Framework, social media, recycling and could be facilitated by officers, councillors or members of outside bodies such as Action in Rural Sussex. Opportunities for engagement with young people, such as the Youth Cabinet, could be included within the day. The day would conclude with a public meeting, where feedback and discussion from the workshops occurred. This final section of the day would be open to members of the public, and publicised.

Themed Presentations/discussions

A series of themed presentations could be presented as part of the full Council meetings, which would be followed by discussion in groups, or between all councillors. The presentation could be undertaken by an officer, or a representative from an outside body, but that officer would not facilitate the discussion - that would be the responsibility of the Chair of the Council. A thirty minute slot could be allocated in the agenda for the item, split as follows (10 minutes presentation/10 minutes discussion in groups/10 minutes feedback). This feedback would be noted by officers who would take important points forward in the specific project. The presentations, or discussions could be linked to the Forward Plan so that discussion at full Council could feed into future Cabinet reports and considerations, for example the Wind Farm, fuel poverty or Food Waste.

Work Suggestions Scheme

A standing item could be added to the full Council agenda to give councillors the opportunity to suggest work that Lewes District Council could undertake. This suggestion could be passed onto senior officers, Cabinet members or other Committees such as Scrutiny or Audit, whoever was deemed most appropriate. There would be a time limit allocated at Council meetings for the making of suggestions. Once a suggestion had been made, the relevant officer or Cabinet member would ensure a meeting took place with the councillor making the suggestion to discuss the issue further. A feedback mechanism through an announcement by the Chair of the Council would be put in place to ensure councillors knew what happened to previous suggestions. PAM, the platform for Achieving More specialist collaboration software that the Council owns, could be used to keep track of the results.

Meet Your Representatives Event

Councillors have indicated that attendance at local surgeries is often low. Events could be held throughout the year, possible directly following full Council, when councillors stay behind and attend a “Meet your Representatives” event, where local people are invited to meet local councillors. The event would be publicised through the website and other means. Such an event would be different in character than surgeries as people might attend one out of curiosity and/or interest rather than because they have a current problem that they would like their councillor to resolve for them.

Financial Appraisal

4 There are no financial implications arising from this Report.

Environmental Implications

5 I have completed the Environmental Implications questionnaire and this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report/budget monitoring report/development control report.

Risk Management Implications

6 There are no risk management implications arising as a result of this Report

Equality Implications

7 As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact assessment is not required.

Background Papers

8 None

Appendices

9 None