

Report to:	Council
Relevant Officer:	Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting:	28 June 2023

EXECUTIVE AND COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY REPORTS TO COUNCIL

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider proposed changes to the Council’s Procedural Standing Order on Executive and Combined Fire Authority reports to Council.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To adopt a revised a Procedural Standing Order for Council meetings to replace Council Procedural Standing Order 11 as attached at Appendix 7(a) to the report and for this to be effective from the ordinary Council meeting scheduled for 20 September 2023.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1 above, to agree that the Group Leaders review the revised process within the next 12 months and report back to Council should any change be required, as set out in para 5.9.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure that the process for consideration of Executive reports is more understandable and accountable.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Remain with the current reporting procedure or adopt an alternative.

4.0 Council priority:

4.1 The Executive reports cover all of the Council's priorities.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Under article 16 of the constitution, the Monitoring Officer has a duty to periodically review the Constitution. It states that "A key role for the Monitoring Officer is to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the Constitution adopted by the Council and to make recommendations for change..."

5.2 To this end a Working Group was formed in 2022 by the Monitoring Officer including elected members who held positions of importance in relation to governance. These included the Deputy Leader of the Council, the then Chair of the Audit Committee, the then Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board and the then Chair of the Standards Committee. The Deputy Monitoring Officer also supported this group.

5.3 This Group recommended changes to the Constitution to the November Council in respect of the Articles of the Council and the Procedural Standing Orders for Council and committee meetings. It did highlight the need to review the Council's Procedural Standing Order for Executive and Combined Fire Authority reports to Council but agreed that this be reviewed following the local election.

5.4 Consequently the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer met to consider an improved format for submitting Executive reports to Council and how Executive Members are held to account.

5.5 This report and the attached Appendix sets out the details of a revised process. The Group Leaders were also of the view that no Executive reports should go on this Council agenda but that Council be asked to consider instead this revised way of reporting and start the process from September's ordinary Council meeting.

5.6 The full Council has responsibility for corporate, policy and strategic matters and as such it is envisaged that Executive Members are held to account at the Council meeting in these areas. It was noted that this had been the original aim when the Executive reports to Council had been reviewed in 2015 but the content of reports and associated debate had somewhat moved away from this.

Proposals

5.7 In view of the above, it is proposed that Executive Member reporting at Council meetings should comprise of a single concise report from each Executive Member on a particular strategic, corporate or policy issue (or issues) with an opportunity for

general question/ comments at the end of the debate. These would be presented by each Executive Member as set out in Appendix 7(a). The time of 3 minutes per speaker it is proposed should remain but with answers being given during the debate by the Executive Member, with the Mayor calling on the Executive Member to respond as appropriate during the debate. (This is set out in more detail in Appendix 7a).

- 5.8 It is proposed that there be no overall limit on the time for questions/ comments per single Executive/ Fire Authority report with the Mayor managing the debate to ensure progress is made with dealing with business. The overall time for Executive reports being considered over the last 2 years has been approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes and it is suggested that this be used as a guide by the Mayor in managing the debate. More details on how the debate will take place and be managed is set out in the attached draft procedural standing order.
- 5.9 The two Group Leaders were supportive of this change to the way reports were presented but also were keen to see how it would work in practice. To that aim it is proposed that the process be reviewed by them within the next 12 months and if there is any change required then a report be brought back to Council.
- 5.10 A revised procedural standing order is attached at Appendix 7(a), which gives further details of how the reporting process would operate at Council for both Executive and Combined Fire Authority reporting.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 7(a) – Draft revised Procedural Standing Order

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 Article 16 of the Council’s Constitution (Review and Revision of the Constitution) sets out the duty of the Monitoring Officer to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution. The Council is required to approve any recommended actions which would consequently amend the Constitution.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 The proposals ensure that Executive Members are held to account at the right level.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 One of the Council's values is accountability and these proposals help enforce this principle.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Consultation has taken place with the working group identified at paragraph 5.4.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.