



Minutes of the meeting of the BUSINESS MANAGEMENT GROUP held on WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2003 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Gerrella
Councillor Pugh (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Dransfield, I Henderson (substitute for Councillor Tallack), Irons (substitute for Councillor K Wilson), Miles and Williams

Officers: J Moffoot (Head of Democratic Services), J Boothroyde (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), S Heap (Democratic Services Manager), C Taylor (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) and J Sismey (Committee Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Tallack and K Wilson

BMG03 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Group held on 19 March, 22 April and 20 May 2003, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BMG04 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

Further to Minute BMG71, the Group considered the outcome of a review of the Council's Constitutional arrangements. It was noted that the review addressed the operation of the Council meeting, the Cabinet, the Forward Plan and the Overview and Scrutiny process and had been supported by information from a questionnaire to all Members and senior officers and examples from other authorities.

With regard to the review of the operation of the Council meeting, the Group considered the possibility of adopting themed meetings and having a State of the Borough debate. It was suggested that this approach would give the Council the opportunity to provide a public forum for items of major public interest and for the Council to be seen to be providing leadership for the community on these issues.

The Group also noted that the majority of Members of the Council, who had responded to the questionnaire, were in favour of allocating

time at Council meetings to receive reports from the Cabinet and Overview Committees.

The possibility of the Council appointing a 'Speaker' to chair its meetings, so giving the Mayor a purely ceremonial role, was also discussed. However, despite being an innovation adopted by a number of councils, it was noted that, in the opinion of officers, there was no legal basis for the Mayor, if present, not to chair meetings of the Council.

The Group recognised that if the Council was to adopt any of the suggested changes to the organisation of the Council meeting, it would be necessary both for careful time management of the meeting and for Member involvement in the management of the Council meeting preparation process.

The Group also discussed other possible changes to the Constitution which it considered would improve debate. The changes discussed included how the Council dealt with amendments to motions submitted by Members.

The Group also gave consideration to Cabinet Members taking 'Key Decisions' and to revising the current financial threshold for 'Key Decisions'.

RESOLVED -

1. That it be agreed in principle that the format of Council meetings be revised to include themed meetings, including an Annual State of the Borough debate, a higher profile for reports from the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny bodies, subject to a further report giving more details of how the changes would work in practice.
2. That the Cabinet Procedure Rules be amended to require the Cabinet to address specifically each recommendation made by an Overview and Scrutiny body.
3. That the Cabinet Procedure Rules be amended to allocate the Chair or a nominated spokesperson of an Overview and Scrutiny body up to 10 minutes to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the body on a particular matter to the Cabinet.
4. That, from September 2003, the period of each Forward Plan be extended to cover the coming twelve-month period.
5. That all matters being referred to the Cabinet be included on the Forward Plan as soon as they are known.
6. That individual Cabinet Members be authorised to take Key Decisions, subject to the notification requirements of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and the call-in provisions.

7. That the financial threshold for Key Decisions be increased to £100,000.
8. That consideration of changes to Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and to the remit of the Business Management Group be deferred to the next meeting of the Group.
9. That officers be requested to prepare amendments to the Constitution to give effect to the changes approved, for consideration by the Group and recommendation to the Council in due course.

BMG05 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Group considered appointments to outside bodies due for 2003.

The Group noted that the Cabinet had already made a number of appointments to bodies of strategic importance.

RESOLVED –

1. That the appointments to outside bodies for 2003, as set in the attached **Annex**, be approved.
2. That officers be requested to investigate the need for Member representation on the David Baxter Management Committee, in light of the current representative having not been invited to a meeting for some time.

BMG06 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group considered the date of the Group's next meeting.

RESOLVED -

That the next scheduled meeting (16 July 2003) be cancelled and rearranged for week commencing 21 July 2003.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.46 PM