

Subject: The Role of Full Council

Status: For Publication

Report to: The Council

Date: 25th June 2008

Report of: Executive Director of Regulatory Services

Portfolio

Holder: Finance and Resources

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider to role and format of full Council in the light of the political management arrangements adopted at the last Council meeting on 26th March 2008.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council introduced Cabinet decision making arrangements on 1st October 2005, which has resulted in a change in the role of full Council. Previously a significant portion of the full Council agenda would have involved considering reports from the Council's Committees. However, day to day decisions within the budget and policy framework are now taken by the Cabinet. The result is that full Council has less traditional business to transact. It now meets approximately every two months.

4.2 The formal role of Council includes the following functions:-

- to agree the Budget and set the Council Tax
- to agree the Constitution
- to agree the policy framework, including various strategies and plans
- to decide the political management arrangements
- to appoint a Leader and Deputy Leader
- to appoint the Chief Executive
- to take decisions outside the budget and policy framework

4.3 Typically Council meetings tend to be formulaic, with the majority of business comprising questions from Councillors. Public Question Time appears on the Summons, although questions are seldom raised under this item. In general, the meetings are ritualistic and dominated by procedure. In 2007/08 Members relaxed the rules in relation to question time to facilitate more constructive debate.

4.4 Members have requested options to revitalise the role of full Council turning the meeting into an interesting and exciting event.

4.5 The Council has a crucial role to play in supporting community leadership. Full Council is the primary event for important local issues to be considered and it is proposed that Council could be a forum for debate on single issues, similar to the role that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had when this was in operation.

4.6 A number of topics are set out below as suggestions for future meetings of the Council:

24th September

Highways in Rossendale

County Councillors would be invited to the meeting to focus on the strategic issues for Rossendale, for example, unadopted highways, budget allocation, Section 106 spend etc.

10th December

Health in Rossendale

The Primary Care Trust would be invited to present information on the health issues facing Rossendale and Members would debate on how these issues will be addressed.

26th February 2009

Budget

This meeting could be with all Members and stakeholders involved in a free and open debate and the audience - including the public, local business leaders and partner organisations could question Members on budget matters. The Chairs of Neighbourhood Forum meetings could present feedback from their meetings on what priorities are emerging for each neighbourhood and how the budget could address those priorities.

25th March 09

Annual Reports on Members' Roles on Outside bodies and Neighbourhood Forums

Members to feedback on their role on the various outside bodies to which they have been appointed. The organisations could also be invited to attend and participate in the meeting. The Chairs of the Neighbourhood Forums to report on the activities of the Forum meetings and achievements.

October – Special event involving all Members

State of the Borough Debate 2008/09 and Priorities for 2009/2010

There is scope to improve the State of the Borough address to be more than just a statement of past achievements and future proposals. This meeting could be turned into a specific event with all Members and stakeholders involved in a free and open debate and the audience - including the public, local business leaders and partner organisations would be able to give their views on the challenges facing Rossendale and how we should respond to them and consider priorities for next year. The use of the handheld voting system could be introduced to make the session interactive. The meeting would not follow the same format as Full Council and the detail of the event would be agreed with Group Leaders.

- 4.7 It is suggested that Members keep the structure under review to ensure that full Council remains effective. The start time of Council may also need to be considered in light of the additional business.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 The report is welcomed to encourage community engagement in the democratic process.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 There are no specific human resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The report sets out proposals to develop the role of Full Council and to ask Members to consider options set out in the report together with options which they may wish to put forward for consideration.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That Council considers the report and agrees a programme of topics for debate at future meetings.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Group Leaders, Portfolio Holder, Executive Management Team.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required No

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

Contact Officer	
Name	Heather Moore
Position	Committee and Member Services Manager
Service / Team	Democratic Services
Telephone	01706 252423
Email address	heathermoore@rossendalebc.gov.uk

No background papers