	Governance and Audit Committee	**Item**
		12

26 July 2016

Report of	**Monitoring Officer**	**Author**	**Andrew Weavers**
			☎ **282213**
Title	**Review of Meetings and Ways of Working**		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

> **This report requests the Committee to agree to review the
> Council's meetings and procedures**

1. Decision(s) Required

1.1 To note the contents of this report.

1.2 To agree that a further report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee providing more detail of the process and methodology of the review.

2. Background

2.1 The Chair of the Committee has intimated that we should review a range of issues regarding the way that we work as an Authority and that this Committee should undertake a review of the Council's meetings and associated procedures as part of its work programme.

2.3 With the advent of digital challenge and the increase in social media the time is now ripe to review how the Council makes decisions and how it conducts its public meetings. In addition whilst the "Have your Say" slot at meetings has been in place for many years and members of the public have participated and contributed to meetings, the level of attendance and engagement has been low (with the exception of high profile planning meetings). It is also worth reviewing whether some formal meetings could be held outside of the Town Hall.

2.3 Traditionally formal meeting agendas have been published on paper (all agendas have been published electronically on the Council's website for a number of years). However the time is right (subject to the necessary IT infrastructure and equipment being in place) to commit to move to electronic agendas and meeting papers.

2.4 There are several pieces of work already in train which will facilitate some of these issues i.e. work on improving technology for Councillors as part of digital challenge (including use of the Council Members Information System (CMIS) application which enables the delivery of committee agendas on devices), improvements to the Town Hall wi-fi and the work being undertaken by the Member Development Group.

3. Proposals

3.1 That the Committee undertakes a review of the Council's formal meetings and associated procedures as detailed in the Scoping Document attached at Appendix 1as part of its work programme.

3.2   That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee which provides more information on the methodology and timescales etc.

4.   Strategic Plan References

4.1   The manner in which the Council governs its business is an underpinning mechanism in the Council's Strategic Plan aims to set out the direction and future potential for our Borough.

5.   Financial, Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Consultation, Community Safety, Health, Publicity and Safety and Risk Management Implications

5.1   None identified.

Scoping Document

Objectives
- Improvement of public participation at public meetings   - Making public meetings more accessible and engaging for residents   - Make the way we work more flexible to improve the opportunity for an improved diversity of Councillors   - Offer Councillors a more efficient way of working through better use of new technology

Scope
To review a range of issues regarding the way the Council currently works including: - Start time of public meetings – currently all public meetings start at 6pm and this is a growing issue as the diversity of Councillors changes and more are of working age, this presents a barrier for participation from some groups.   - Making meetings more resident friendly – we have in place a "have your say" slot at the beginning of all public meetings, however, few people use this right. We need to explore why and how we might encourage people to come and take the opportunity to have their say.   - Consider whether holding all meetings in the Town Hall is still appropriate.   - How we might make some of our reports more accessible.   - A look at how we run meetings and what the public think of them.   - Training for Councillors – evaluation of how effective this is.   - Modernising our language and behaviours.   - Technology for Councillors – encouraging paperless agendas, accessibility, audio visual equipment.   - Review of meetings procedure rules.

Key Stakeholders, Partners or other agencies involved
The key stakeholders and interested bodies are likely to include:-   - Councillors;   - Members of the Public;   - Parish Councils;   - Other Local Authorities.

Evidence and research to be gathered
- To gather information and learn about other Council's practices;   - To consult with the public regarding what they think of our meetings and how they could be improved;   - To look at the practicality and likely costs of any possible solutions.

Timescales and Reporting
Detailed timescales to be determined.

Lead Officers
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