

Report to the Council

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 26 July 2011

Chairman: Councillor R Bassett

Item: 12

1. MEMBER SUBSTITUTION AT COMMITTEES

RECOMMENDING:

- (1) That Procedural Standing Order 14(4) (i) and (ii) be amended as follows:
 - (a) to permit a leader, Deputy Leader or other appointed member of a political group to notify the Assistant to the Chief Executive of any substitute members to attend a meeting;
 - (b) to require that any political group member so appointed be notified to the Assistant to the Chief Executive at the beginning of each council year;
 - (c) to amend the deadline for notifying substitutes from “not later than 10.00a.m.” to “not later than 60 minutes before the commencement of the meeting concerned”;
 - (2) That these alterations be published in the Constitution;
 - (3) That, if possible, the substitution notification deadline be included on every agenda where this is permitted under the Constitution; and
 - (4) That this process be reviewed after 1 year.
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Report:

1. We have received a report of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Standing Panel on Substitution. The District Council’s Constitution allows for substitutes to be nominated at Overview and Scrutiny Committees/Panels and the District Development Control Committee (Operational Standing Order (14) – Non Executive Bodies).
2. Currently a substitution has to be notified to Democratic Services by 10.00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. The point of contact is a single member for each group. It has recently been the case that a party whip had undertaken this role. We therefore were asked to consider whether it would be more efficient for more members than just the Leader to undertake this role.
3. At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 April 2011 a request was made for a report to be submitted to the Panel to consider changing the 10.00 a.m. deadline for notification of substitutes to 4.00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. It was agreed that this would provide groups with greater flexibility when arranging substitutions, particularly if apologies are received at short notice.
4. We noted that not all meetings start at 7.30 p.m., for instance the Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel starts at 5.30 p.m. We considered the options available to deal with both issues and propose that substitutions must be notified not later than 60 minutes before the

relevant meeting, whilst on the question of who notifies the substitution, we recommend that the Leader or Deputy Leader or a nominated political group member should undertake this role.

5. We accepted the Standing Panel's proposal that nominated political group member's mentioned above, should be notified to Democratic Services at the beginning of each Council year. We also supported the suggestion of officers that, if possible, the substitution deadline is published in each agenda.
6. We feel that these changes to substitution arrangements will make them easier to operate for all concerned and recommend as set out at the commencement of this report, bearing in mind that, if agreed, the Standing panel undertake to review this in 12 months' time.