

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8th July 2004

**CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION OF
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of progress made in the implementation of its suggestions arising from the review of the Constitution.

Background

2. In July 2003 the Council considered a report from the Standards Committee about the review of the Council's Constitution. Council resolved, inter alia:

To ask the Chief Executive, together with the Chairman of the Council and Group Leaders to consider further how the Council might develop the suggestions of the Standards Committee set out at paragraph 19 (b-f), (h), (i), (l) and (m).

3. Paragraph 19 (b-f),(h),(i),(l) and (m) concerned the following suggestions:

Information for members

- b. establishing pre-Council seminars, led by chief or senior officers, to brief members on agenda items of particular importance;
- c. briefings by Cabinet portfolio holders to provide members with information about issues within their remit.
- d. holding seminar style meetings led by chief officers to supplement existing Council meetings, and using these to inform members about major decisions such as statutory and strategic plans to be debated in full Council;

Public involvement

- e. holding the State of Wiltshire debate as a separate meeting of full Council, and inviting participation in the debate from the wider community;
- f. establishing a forum for public debate;
- h. how questions from the public might be answered in a fashion that appears less "scripted" and more immediate;

Council meetings

- i. balancing the content of Council agendas in order to enable fuller and more focussed debate on important topics, and holding one or more additional Council meetings a year;

Member/officer relations

- l. appointing independent facilitators to work with members and officers to establish a framework within which the issues identified in the market research report could be addressed;
- m. preparing a revised Member/Officer Relations Protocol in the light of the facilitation work.

Progress against recommendations

4. Information for members

- A number of seminars have been held for members, covering topics such as emergency planning, sites of archaeological interest, and the Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation. There is a programme of forthcoming seminars, including community leadership and special educational needs.
- Chief officers are holding member briefings prior to committee meetings for members on the committees

5. Public involvement

- The Council held an extraordinary general meeting for the State of Wiltshire debate in April 2004. Officers prepared a briefing paper to inform the debate. The briefing paper was based on the views of residents in Wiltshire's 20 community areas. In future, the State of Wiltshire debate will be held in its own right as an extraordinary general meeting.
- Members resolved that the appropriate cabinet portfolio holder should continue to respond to public questions. The responses are written by officers with detailed subject specific knowledge. For this reason, it is not possible to change the scripted nature of responses to public questions.

6. Council meetings

- Council has scheduled one additional annual meeting devoted to the State of Wiltshire debate. The agenda of the remaining meetings is primarily dictated by external statutory requirements, each of which operates to a timetable that is not determined by the Council. This often results in unbalanced agendas, but this is outside the Council's control.

7. Member/officer relations

- Members resolved not to adopt the recommendation that facilitators be engaged. Consequently recommendations 19 (l) and (m) are not being taken forward at this stage.

Recommendation

8. The Committee is asked to note the current position regarding the implementation of its suggestions arising from the review of the Constitution.

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Report author: Nina Wilton, Corporate Standards Manager

Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: None

Environmental impact of the recommendations contained in this report: None