

## **ANNEX 10 - GUIDELINES FOR PANELS AND TOPIC GROUPS**

### **A. LOCAL PANELS**

- (1) There are 10 Local Panels, each comprising the County Councillors for a District Council area.
- (2) The role of each Panel is to:
  - ensure members are thoroughly briefed on local issues
  - enable members to feedback their views to Council
  - advise on local consultation by the Council
  - oversee and encourage local partnerships with the District Council and other partners.
- (3) Each Panel shall determine its own timetable and procedures.

### **B. CABINET PANELS**

- (1) Cabinet Panels may be established by the Executive, or by the Chief Legal Officer after consultation with the relevant Executive Member.
- (2) Their members shall be appointed by the Executive, or by the Chief Legal Officer after consultation with the relevant Executive Member. The rules of political proportionality shall apply to the membership of each Panel.
- (3) Church and Parent Governor representatives on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are available for co-option to relevant Cabinet Panels (as voting members)
- (4) Chairmen (and Vice-Chairmen if required) of Panels shall be appointed either by the Panel itself, the Executive, or by the Chief Legal Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
- (5) The Chairman if present shall preside; if not present the Vice Chairman (if appointed) shall preside. If there is no Chairman or Vice-Chairman present the members present shall elect a person to preside.
- (6) The date and place of meetings shall be set by the Chairman as far ahead as possible and notified to members. Once a date is set it will not be changed without consulting other members.
- (7) All meetings will be open to the public, press and other councillors, unless the body decided to close the whole or part of a meeting on specified grounds of confidentiality.
- (8) The quorum for a meeting is one quarter of the members, with a minimum of three.

- (9) Smoking is prohibited at meetings.
- (10) Members, and members of the press and public, shall ensure that their mobile phones are switched off or otherwise silenced during the meeting. A person whose mobile phone sounds during the meeting may be warned by the Chairman; if the person's phone sounds again during the meeting after such a warning has been given the Chairman may ask that person to leave the meeting.
- (11) A person whose mobile phone sounds during the meeting may be warned by the Chairman; if the person's phone sounds again during the meeting after such a warning has been given the Chairman may ask that person to leave the meeting.
- (12) An agenda and reports will be sent to members at least 5 clear days in advance of each meeting.
- (13) Minutes of each meeting will be produced and circulated to members of the body.
- (14) If any papers or proceedings of a body are declared to be confidential, members of the body shall honour that confidentiality unless they agree otherwise or the material becomes public in the ordinary course of business.
- (15) Cabinet Panels shall report to the Executive, and may refer matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment.
- (16) Subject to complying with the provisions of the Council's Petitions Scheme public petitions can be presented to a Cabinet Panel.
- (17) The terms 'Agenda Petition', 'Petition for Debate', 'Petition for Presentation' and 'Urgent Petition' used in the following paragraphs are defined in the Council's Petitions Scheme.
- (18) If the petition is an Agenda Petition then the petition will be presented immediately prior to consideration of the relevant item. Petitions for Debate, Urgent Petitions and Petitions for Presentation will be presented following confirmation of the minutes of the meeting as follows:  
firstly, each Petition for Presentation  
  
secondly, any Urgent Petition followed by a discussion on that Urgent Petition subject to a maximum period of 20 minutes in total for presentation of the Urgent Petition by the Petition Organiser and consideration of the Urgent Petition provided that at the discretion of the Chairman of the Panel this period of time can be varied;  
  
then, each Petition for Debate followed by a discussion on that Petition for Debate subject to a maximum period of 20 minutes in total for

presentation and consideration of each Petition for Debate provided that at the discretion of the Chairman of the Panel this period of time can be varied

- (19) The Petition Organiser for an Agenda Petition, Petition for Debate or an Urgent Petition may address the Cabinet Panel for no more than three minutes on the subject of the petition but thereafter shall not have the right to speak further. The Petition Organiser for a Petition for Presentation will inform members of the text of the petition and the number of signatures but will not otherwise speak.
- (20) Following consideration of a Petition for Debate or an Urgent Petition the Panel can make a recommendation as follows:
- refer the matter to Cabinet
  - make a recommendation to officers as to how to respond to the petition
  - request officers undertake further work and either liaise with the Local Member and relevant Executive Member before responding to the petition or bring the matter back to Panel
  - acknowledge the petition but recommend that no further action is taken.
- (21) Following presentation of a Petition for Presentation there will be no discussion on the petition and the petition will be referred (at the discretion of the Chairman) to the next appropriate meeting of the Panel, or to officers for consideration and report to the local member and Group Spokesmen.
- (22) The Council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) shall serve as one of his or her Group's members on the Community Safety and Planning Cabinet Panel and report to that Cabinet Panel on the business of the PCP and answer questions thereon for such period of time as the Panel Chairman may reasonably decide.

### **C. TOPIC GROUPS**

- (1) These bodies will be established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Health Scrutiny Committee or by the Chief Legal Officer after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen.
- (2) Their members shall be appointed by the Scrutiny Committee or by the Chief Legal Officer after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen. They shall not include Executive Members or Deputy Executive Members.

- (3) Topic Groups established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will
- have a Chairman and Vice Chairman (appointed either by the Topic Group, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or by the Chief Legal Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) who will work together between meetings and deal with issues by consensus wherever possible. No political group is able to hold more than one of these posts, (the 4 parent governor and 2 church representative members of the OSC are treated as a group for this purpose).
  - have scoping documents drafted by officers and approved by the Topic Group Chairman/Vice Chairman and OSC Chairman/Vice Chairmen.
  - have membership drawn from all members of the Council (except for Executive Members and Deputy Executive Members); and from the church and parent governor representatives where Education items are being dealt with.
  - work on time limited, task and finish basis.
  - report with recommendations direct to the appropriate decision maker (Executive/Executive Member or Chief Officer). Such reports with recommendations shall be published on the Council's website. Upon receipt of a report with recommendations the person or body concerned shall respond within two months and the response shall be published on the Council's website.
- (4) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will report to the Council at each meeting on scrutiny activity, inviting Topic Group Chairmen to contribute where appropriate.
- (5) Church and Parent Governor representatives on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are available for co-option to relevant Topic Groups as voting members.
- (6) Organisations which previously nominated non-voting members to the former Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee may continue to nominate to a pool of experts who will be available for co-option on to Topic Groups, as non-voting members.
- (7) Topic Groups established by the Health Scrutiny Committee will
- have a Chairman and a Vice Chairman (appointed either by the Health Scrutiny Committee, the Topic Group itself, or by the Chief Legal Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee).

- have scoping documents drafted by officers and approved by the Topic Group Chairman/Vice Chairman and the Health Scrutiny Committee Chairman/Vice Chairman.
  - have membership drawn from all members of the Council (except for Executive members) and from the District Council members of the main committee.
  - work on a time limited, task and finish basis.
  - report with recommendations to the Health Scrutiny Committee. Such reports with recommendations shall be published on the Council's website.
- (8) The Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee will report to the Council at each meeting on Health scrutiny activity, inviting Topic Group Chairmen to contribute where appropriate.
- (9) Organisations which previously nominated non-voting members to the former Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee may continue to nominate to a pool of experts who will be available for co-option on to Topic Groups, as non-voting members.
- (10) The quorum for a meeting of a Topic Group is one quarter of the members, with a minimum of three.