

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not* been included in the relevant Forward Plan

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Management of Business at Council Meetings – Proposed Amendments to Standing Orders

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To propose amendments to the Council's Standing Orders

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That appropriate amendments be made to the Council's Standing Orders to provide for the following as set out in the report:

- i. That meetings of the Council commence at 10.00 and last not more than three hours in duration unless it is expressly agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow for the consideration of business to continue
- ii. That responses to questions be limited to five minutes
- iii. Subject to recommendation 2.1 iv that the duration of speeches be limited to five minutes including any right of reply
- iv. That the mover of a recommendation to Council or of a motion to consider a substantive report requiring Council approval be permitted to speak for up to ten minutes
- v. That the length of time for the consideration of Notices of Motion submitted under Standing Order No 6 not exceed one hour
- vi. That the Order of business set out on the Summons for the meeting follows the order set out in paragraph 5 of the report

- 2.2 That the recommended changes be implemented forthwith and take effect for this and future meetings of the Council and that Standing Order 41 be waived accordingly

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Protocol – Comments to be addressed through the Mayor

The general protocol is that members should address their comments through the Mayor and not address each other directly across the Council Chamber. This is expressly provided for in Standing Order 13(3). Observance of this requirement needs to be followed consistently and will facilitate the need to focus on the principle under consideration and not the person.

There is a role for the Mayor as the Chair of the meeting in enforcing this if necessary and the Mayor would have the discretion to ask a member persistently failing to observe this requirement to sit down.

3.2. Time of and duration of meetings

The following changes to timing are proposed for formal consideration.

- The Council Meeting to commence at 10.00am rather than at 10.30 as at present to facilitate the completion of business by lunchtime
- The meeting should therefore be no longer than three hours duration which could be viewed as a sufficient period of time to ensure essential business is dispatched and to allow for reasonable debate. It is proposed (see below) to limit the overall amount of time available for the debating of Notices of Motion submitted by members under Standing Order 6 to one hour.
- This should be formalised by Standing Orders providing for guillotine at 1.00pm. Any item of business under consideration at that time would proceed to the vote. There is always the facility to suspend Standing Orders if there was particularly urgent business which had to be concluded following a refreshment break at that time. Other substantive business outstanding would be deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

3.3. Order of Business

It would assist in concluding the business within the above timeframe to structure the order of agenda items as set out on the Summons with reference to relative importance in terms of what requires formal Council approval. So recommendations to Council and substantive reports requiring a decision of the Council which are the essential items which require formal consideration and approval should be considered earlier in the meeting.

The following order of business is suggested:

1. Announcements.
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Cabinet Recommendations to Council
4. Substantive Reports requiring a decision of the Council
5. Receipt of Minutes
6. Questions by Elected Members
7. Notices of Motion from elected members under Standing Order 6

3.4. Questions from Elected Members

Standing Orders now provide for the total period for Questions not to exceed 30 minutes.

It is also proposed that provision be made for an answer to a question including an answer to a supplementary question not to exceed five minutes.

Members should be encouraged to consider other mechanisms to secure answers where the question is essentially seeking information and to consider whether the matter raised may be better dealt with by Motion.

3.5. Notices of Motion brought by Elected Members under Standing Order 6

It is proposed for formal consideration that the maximum overall period for debate of Notices of Motion from elected members does not exceed one hour. At the end of one hour the motion under debate would be put to the vote unless decision taken by meeting to extend duration of the debate. Any Notices of Motion not considered would be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Council.

With the reduction in the length of speeches it could be anticipated that an acceptable number of motions could be debated at any meetings and any motions not considered could be deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

3.6. Length of Speeches

It is proposed for formal consideration that duration of Speeches during debate be limited to five minutes rather than ten including five minutes for a right of reply.

In the case of debates on Cabinet recommendations or substantive reports requiring a decision of the Council the mover of the item should properly be permitted to speak for up to ten minutes. This reflects the relative significance of these items of business on the Council agenda as these are the matters that require authorisation by full Council.

3.7. Proposal

These proposed changes overall should still allow sufficient time within the recommended maximum three hours duration of the meeting for the proper consideration of Council business ; in particular recommendations to or substantive items for full Council which represent its essential business.

It would be helpful to secure cross party support to these suggested changes and if so it is proposed that they be implemented forthwith and take effect for this and future meetings of the Council. This will require the waiver of Standing Order 41 which otherwise would require the recommended changes to be deferred for consideration to the next meeting of the Council.

Sarah Norman

Chief Executive

17th September 2019