



**AGENDA ITEM: 15**

**CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE: 15 OCTOBER 2015**

**CABINET: 10 NOVEMBER 2015**

**COUNCIL: 16 DECEMBER 2015**

---

**Report of: Borough Solicitor**

**Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (People and Places)**

**Contact for further information: Mrs J Denning (Extn. 5384)  
jacky.denning@westlancs.gov.uk**

---

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AT MEETINGS – DRAFT PROTOCOL**

---

Wards affected: Borough wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To consider extending public speaking at meetings via an agreed Protocol.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

2.1 That agreed comments on the report and recommendations at paragraph 4 below, be submitted to Council.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

3.1 That agreed comments on the report and recommendations at paragraph 4 below, be submitted to Council.

**4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

4.1 That the work undertaken by the Public Involvement In Meetings Working Group (the Working Group), at its meetings held on 28 July and 28 September 2015, as detailed in paragraph 5, be noted.

4.2 That the resource issues set out in paragraph 9 of the report be given further consideration through the budget setting process for the next financial year.

4.3 That the Protocol, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and

implemented from April 2016, subject to the related additional staffing requirement being agreed at February Council.

4.4 That in respect of implementation, consideration be given to the recommendation of the Working Group and, Either:

(a) The following meetings affected should start at the times indicated below, ie. 30 minutes earlier, to allow for the extension of public involvement in meetings:

- 7.00pm for meetings of Cabinet, Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.30pm for meetings of Audit & Governance Committee (although the usual training sessions held prior to this Committee would then start at 6.00pm).

(Standards Committee meetings are called on an ad hoc basis.)

Or:

(b) The following meetings affected should continue to start at the usual time ie.

- 7.30pm for meetings of Cabinet, Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.00pm for meetings of Audit & Governance Committee (Training sessions are held at 6.30pm prior to the start of this Committee).

(Standards Committee meetings called on an ad hoc basis)

4.5 That relevant changes to the Constitution, as a result of the decisions above, be made by the Borough Solicitor, as appropriate.

---

## **5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN MEETINGS WORKING GROUP**

5.1 At its meeting held on 28 July 2015 the Public Involvement in Meetings Working Group considered various options for extending the current arrangements for public involvement in meetings and provided some suggestions on how it would like to see the matter progressed, taking into consideration all relevant matters including current resource issues.

5.2 At its meeting held on 28 September 2015 the Working Group considered a draft Protocol which had been designed to take into account the suggestions put forward by the Working Group, whilst addressing procedural issues and seeking to minimise the need for additional resources.

5.3 The Working Group recommended that meetings of Council should not be included at this time and that meetings of Cabinet, Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee would be more appropriate. It was also recommended by the Working Group that in order to accommodate the additional time to allow for public involvement, meetings should commence 30 minutes earlier. Members will wish to consider what impact the earlier start time could have on Members and Officers.

## **6.0 CONSTITUTION**

- 6.1 If public involvement arrangements are approved by Council, revisions to the relevant parts of the Constitution will be required. These will be undertaken by the Borough Solicitor on implementation.

## **7.0 FUTURE REVIEW**

- 7.1 The Working Group has agreed to review the following matters, 12 months after implementation:
- 'Procedures for the Public and Applicants who wish to Speak at the Planning Committee on Planning Applications that Might Affect Them'
  - Public Participation at meetings of Council
  - Resources.

## **8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 8.1 Extending the provision of public involvement in meetings provides another method to enable local people to raise concerns or state their views to the Council, providing an additional feedback mechanism for the community and improving access for all.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Working Group has considered various options to take matters forward and agreed that resource implications must be considered as part of any new initiative. The attached protocol has direct resource implications for Member Services and other services, however efforts will be made to contain these.

- 9.2 Additional duties under the attached draft protocol would include:-
- (a) Responding to enquiries regarding public speaking from residents in relation to providing advice and assistance on eligibility to speak
  - (b) After deadline for receipt of prescribed forms:
    - prioritising the order of speakers in accordance with the protocol
    - confirming attendance with applicants and providing advice and assistance in relation to meeting protocols
    - providing reasons to applicants for rejecting applications, should a large number of applications be received or other reasons (this could generate additional phone calls from dissatisfied residents)
    - redacting certain personal information from submitted forms
    - separating and scanning papers into speakers and non speakers and circulating these to relevant officers and members,.
  - (c) At the meeting – Meet with speakers prior to the start of the meeting and provide any further advice and assistance they should require
  - (d) Post meeting – Respond to any queries from residents who had submitted requests in relation to decisions taken (this may also be from dissatisfied residents where they may not agree with the decision taken).

It is estimated that resources equating to 7.12 hours per week on Scale 6, located in Member Services would be required, which would cost an additional £6,000 per year.

9.3 There may also be additional work for report authors and other officers, arising from the issues raised via public speaking. This will need to be considered as part of the review after 12 months.

## **10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

10.1 The report provides an opportunity to further develop public involvement at meetings in order to improve transparency and openness. The Protocol attached to the report balances this opportunity with the commitment to accommodate relevant business at meetings. If the report is not agreed then the current arrangements that are in place will continue to operate.

---

---

### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required, a formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report

### **Appendices**

1. Draft Protocol Public speaking at other meetings
2. Equality Impact Assessment
3. Minute of the Corporate & Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 October 2015 (Cabinet & Council only)
4. Minute of Cabinet held on 10 November 2015 (Council only)