

**THE EXECUTIVE**

**15 MARCH 2005**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE STRATEGY**

<b>THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>
<p>This report is submitted to the Executive for comments / strategic direction prior to any recommendations being made to the Assembly about the Council's political structure.</p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The Council modernised its political structure in 2000/2001. It moved away from traditional, services-based committees (e.g. Housing, Social Services) to a Leader and Cabinet model. The new approach was trialled for a short while before the Assembly formally adopted it, and the Council Constitution, on 9 January 2002.</p> <p>At that time, to allow a reasonable period of stability, the Assembly agreed that the structure would not be altered for a period of over three years, other than to cater for any legislative changes or minor administrative amendments. The situation would then be reconsidered to see if any change was required in the light of experience. This is due in May 2005. (Assembly Minute 55 – January 2002.)</p> <p>From an officer perspective, the structure appears to have worked very well and has gone some considerably way to meeting the objectives originally behind the change. These were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Involve the community more fully in the Council's work</li><li>• Listen to, represent and act on the community's views more effectively</li><li>• Provide a clearer focus on community priorities</li><li>• Provide more effective and efficient decision-making across the Council</li><li>• Make it clear where decisions are made and who is responsible for them</li><li>• Improve joint working arrangements between the Council and its partners.</li></ul> <p>Over the past three years there has been very little need to make any administrative changes.</p> <p>The simplicity and clarity of the structure is also an important feature. Duplicated roles are avoided, unlike some authorities where, for example, Scrutiny mirrors Executive portfolios, and their structures bear considerable resemblance to the old committees. There is a more strategic feel to decision making than was previously the case.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation has been reviewed since the Constitution was adopted and the level of delegation to officers was confirmed as "the right mechanism for achieving the streamlined approach to decision making that was required as part of the revised political arrangements". (Scheme of Delegation Scrutiny Panel 2003.)</p>	

Consultation has recently been carried out by the Leader of the Council with all Members. Only one Member responded raising two points: (a) regarding Executive Members' portfolios and working arrangements with Directors (*this is not directly a matter for this review*), and (b) suggesting that the appointments of Leader, Deputy Leader, the Executive Members, and Chairs and Deputy Chairs should be made every four years coinciding with local elections, rather than annually. A mechanism for removing someone from office in between appointments, if necessary, would need to be built in to the process.

It is also relevant to mention that the Chief Executive is proposing to commission a review of Community Forums during the coming year.

As a reminder, the main elements of the political structure are: The Assembly, The Executive, The Scrutiny Management Board, Community Forums, The Standards Committee, The Development Control Board, The Personnel Board, The Licensing & Regulatory Board, Scrutiny Panels, Policy Commissions, and the Ceremonial Council.

### **Recommendation**

The Executive is asked to:

1. Consider whether they wish any further work to be undertaken or whether they feel they have sufficient confidence / satisfaction in the political structure to recommend its continuance in its current form until such time as change might be considered necessary, and
2. Note the intention to carry out a review of Community Forums during 2005/06.

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### **Consultees:**

The Leader of the Council (portfolio Member)  
All Members of the Council  
The Management Team  
The Monitoring Officer

### **Background Papers:**

Assembly minutes 55 / January 2002 and 127 / May 2001  
Final report of the Scheme of Delegation Scrutiny Panel – Assembly June 2003  
Letter from the Leader of the Council to all Members dated 25 January 2005  
Various internal e-mails