

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR JOINT MEETINGS BETWEEN THE POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS AND THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### 1. Reason for Report

This report seeks approval of the arrangements for joint meetings between the Political Group Leaders and the Corporate Management Team.

### 2. Glossary of Terms

CMT – Corporate Management Team

PGLs – Political Group Leaders

SLA – Strategic Level Assessment (self assessment undertaken as part of preparatory work for the Best Value and Community Planning Audit in 2008)

### 3. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree the arrangements for the joint meetings between the Political Group Leaders and the Corporate Management Team as detailed in Section 10.

### 4. Plan Links and Contributions

4.1 The proposed arrangements support the Council values of continuous improvement, trust and honesty, openness and communication, team work and partnership.

4.2 There are also direct contributions to the Strategic Level Assessment Improvement Plan Recommendation 1, "Action by Members and senior officers to develop a strategic and effective working relationship that supports the organisation and delivery of Best Value to the people of Dumfries and Galloway"; Recommendation 4, "Ensure the role of the Corporate Management Team and Members provides more strategic focus and direction, is more outward looking and is responsive to consultation"; and Recommendation 7, "Develop a culture to support Best Value across the organisation to ensure continuous improvement is seen as an intrinsic part of sound working, rather than a bureaucratic process".

4.3 Elsewhere on this agenda is the developing Improvement Plan and meetings of PGLs and CMT also support this work.

### 5. Resources/Value for Money Assessment

The principal resource comprises the time of the PGLs, CMT and officer support.

### 6. Risk Assessment

There is a high risk that tensions and/or poor relationships prevent effective leadership. The management of this risk is to put in place liaison arrangements that offer an opportunity for the leaders of the organisation to engage in joint discussions and to develop an effective working relationship. This is particularly valuable when addressing the recommendations of the Best Value and Community Planning Audit Report and implementing the Single Outcome Agreement.

## **7. Authorities and Legal Implications**

There are no identified legal implications associated with such a joint meeting. Full Council has traditionally approved the liaison arrangements for Chief Executive/CMT and Political Groups/Groupings.

## **8. Consultation**

The Corporate Management Team and the Operations Manager Corporate and Community Planning have been consulted and are in agreement with the terms of the report.

## **9. Background**

9.1 One of the actions in the Strategic Level Assessment Action Plan agreed by Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2008 is a joint meeting between CMT and PGLs. This arose under Commitment and Leadership: Recommendation 1, "Action by Members and senior officers to develop a strategic and effective working relationship that supports the organisation and delivery of Best Value to the people of Dumfries and Galloway"; Recommendation 4, "Ensure the role of the Corporate Management Team and Members provides more strategic focus and direction, is more outward looking and is responsive to consultation"; and Recommendation 7, "Develop a culture to support Best Value across the organisation to ensure continuous improvement is seen as an intrinsic part of sound working, rather than a bureaucratic process".

9.2 Alongside this work, the Full Council on 18 December 2008 agreed role descriptions of key Members including the Leader and his role includes "to ensure that effective working relationships are developed throughout the Council".

9.3 Therefore, in February 2009 the Leader asked the Chief Executive to arrange a joint meeting of PGLs and CMT to discuss the remit of and arrangements of joint meetings. Discussion took place on 1 April 2009 and it was agreed the proposals be discussed within the respective Groups and comments fed back to the Leader. On 17 April 2009 the Leader asked the Chief Executive to bring the undernoted proposal to Full Council to approve the arrangements for future joint meetings. At Full Council on 30 April 2009 the Chief Executive informed Members that the report requested by the Leader would be submitted to the Full Council meeting on 14 May 2009.

## **10. Proposed Arrangements for PGLs/CMT Liaison Meetings**

### **10.1 Purpose**

- to embed political leadership in the Council
- to build strategic leadership through consolidating working relationships
- to develop a shared understanding of issues within the Single Outcome Agreement
- to develop a shared understanding of the means by which the Council delivers Best Value

### **10.2 Remit**

- the meetings to follow a work programme agreed in advance based initially, on the Single Outcome Agreement and the Best Value and Community Planning Audit Improvement Plan;
- items of business will be for discussion and guidance only and will not make decisions that should be taken by Committee

### 10.3 Frequency

- joint liaison meetings between the PGLs and CMT to be scheduled three weekly in the first instance with a duration of around 2 hours;
- frequency reviewed on at least an annual basis;
- meetings to be held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays by rotation;
- meetings to be scheduled in the Central Diary

### 10.4 Format

- round table discussions of PGLs and CMT with appropriate officers in attendance as required;
- the agenda will be set by the Leader;
- the meetings will be chaired by the Leader;
- substitutes will be allowed

### 10.5 Administrative Arrangements

- administration of the meetings will be undertaken by the Executive, Policy and Community Planning in the Chief Executive Service;
- the agenda, note of the previous meeting and any supporting papers will be circulated by e-mail the week before the meeting to PGLs and CMT;
- invitations to officers, other than CMT members, who may be invited to attend to speak to items of business will be sent from Executive, Policy and Community Planning in the Chief Executive Service

10.6 The proposed arrangements provide an opportunity for the leaders of the organisation to come together and develop trust and personal relationships; and provide an opportunity to develop personal and shared understanding of key issues facing the Council.

10.7 By involving all five PGLs and full CMT and by allowing substitutes it maximises the number of people benefiting from this structure and there is recognition that although not everyone will be able to make every meeting due to other commitments, there is an urgent need to move this work forward.

## **11. Related Activities**

11.1 Clearly PGLs and CMT meetings are only part of the programme of work associated with the Audit Improvement Plan. It will both support and benefit from other elements of the Improvement Plan and provide a useful forum for the new Chief Executive to develop relationships and build an understanding of key issues.

11.2 There is also a monthly meeting between the Chief Executive, with CMT members as required, and each of the three Political Groupings which provides an opportunity for dialogue on a range of issues. These meetings are recorded by the Executive, Policy and Community Planning Unit in the Chief Executive Service and the minutes are circulated to all Members.

## **12. Conclusion**

12.1 This is a new arrangement for both Members and officers and requires commitment and a positive approach if it is to be successful and fulfil its potential.

12.2 The proposed arrangements have been put forward by Members following discussions in the Political Groups and are a pragmatic and transparent set of operational arrangements.

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