Full Council Meeting

A report from Overview & Scrutiny

Contents

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Preface

By Cllr Carl Rice, Co-ordinating O&S Committee

Preface

The Full Council meeting is the flagship meeting of the Council, the only time when all members come together to debate and to determine the policy and budget framework of the City Council.

In undertaking this review, it became clear that there are real frustrations from members, in particular at the lack of debate on key local issues, limited opportunity to hold leading members to account and with no real public interest in council meetings. The Committee sought to address these and other issues by recommending actions designed to ensure more backbench engagement with strategic policy development; more challenging ways of holding the Executive, Scrutiny and others to account; and examining ways to facilitate more meaningful backbench and public engagement.

The last of these – public engagement – proved to be a larger topic than this inquiry could properly cover, and so the Co-ordinating O&S Committee will continue with a more in-depth piece of work on citizen engagement, including how we can better engage on policy development.

I took on this inquiry as Chair of Co-ordinating O&S Committee towards the end of the process; and therefore I would like to place on record my appreciation for the work of preceding Chairs - Cllr John Cotton and Cllr Josh Jones, as well as all members of the Committee for their input. The Committee will be reviewing progress in the coming months, and I urge all members to see this report as part of an ongoing process that will see further improvements to City Council meetings as and when required.

Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	That realignment takes place between the Executive, Scrutiny and Full Council with regards to strategic policy development, to give Scrutiny and Full Council a stronger policy role as set out in paragraph 2.2.4 to 2.2.6. A process for ensuring that strategic policy development is channelled more effectively through Scrutiny should be developed as part of the revised Executive/Scrutiny protocol. This will enable backbenchers to engage in shaping major strategic policies at an early stage, and have a stronger opportunity to properly shape and influence the strategic direction of City Council policy.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R02	The Co-ordinating O&S Committee should take forward work on citizen engagement, linked to the work on customer services, but also about how citizens' can engage with policy development. This should include consideration of a genuinely participative process should be explored, perhaps on the Highbury Conference model and involving a citizen's jury.	Chair, Co-ordinating O&S Committee	April 2020
R03	That the Executive report to Full Council four times a year with an *Executive Business Report* as outlined in section 2.3 above, to be commenced in 2019/20. The approach and timetable should be agreed with Co-ordinating O&S Committee ahead of implementation.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R04	That Scrutiny collectively report to Full Council three times a year with a Scrutiny Business Report, as outlined above.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee and Chair of Co-ordinating O&S Committee)	November 2019
R05	That the Full Council agenda is amended in light of the above changes, as set out in Appendix 4.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R06	That the Lead members appointed to regional bodies (such as the West Midlands Combined Authority Joint Scrutiny Committee; the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel and the Transport Delivery Group) are asked to report and take questions at Full Council meetings.	Leader (with Chair of Co-ordinating O&S Committee)	November 2019
R07	That Standing Orders should be amended to: • Ensure that the Leader of the Opposition be called first to put their question at oral questions (as would happen in Parliament) with the leaders of other groups also called at some point in the session. • Ensure that at the Annual Budget meeting, the main opposition group's amendment should be taken first; • That Motions for Debate are retained but that the number is restricted to two per Full Council meeting, on rotation between the political groups; • Pilot a system of Early Day Motions, (as set out in section 2.4 above); • That the Lord Mayor be given discretion to allocate unused time to the next item, with the proviso that each item should start no later than the time indicated on the agenda.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R08	That the membership of Council Business Management Committee be amended to include the Chair of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R09	That an assessment of progress against the recommendations in this report be presented to the Co-ordinating O&S Committee.	Leader	January 2020

1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

1.1.1   One of the recommendations in the Review of Scrutiny, agreed by City Council in March 2018, was that an inquiry into the operation and functions of the meeting of the full City Council (henceforth referred to as "Full Council") should be held.

1.1.2   The Co-ordinating O&S Committee therefore agreed to undertake an inquiry to review the purpose and content of the Full Council meeting to ensure it meets the needs of members and citizens, and promotes good decision-making.

1.2   Our Approach

1.2.1   The inquiry was conducted between October 2018 and February 2019; evidence taken included:

- Members of the Council – through meetings with new members (October 2018) and an open session for all members to attend (January 2019);

- Officers of the Council – the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer gave evidence to members of the Committee in January 2019;

- Professor Colin Copus, Emeritus Professor of Local Politics, De Montfort University and Director of the Local Governance Research Unit, attended the Committee's February 2019 meeting. He has conducted extensive research into local government and Overview & Scrutiny;

- Other local authorities – the agendas and ways of managing business in other local authorities were reviewed as part of the inquiry.

1.2.2   A full list of contributors is set out in Appendix 1.

1.3   Context

Role of Council following the Local Government Act 2000

1.3.1   Prior to 2000, most local authorities delegated functions to committees (although not to individual members) or to officers as they saw fit. The papers for the meetings of many Full Council meetings across the country consisted of the minutes of those various committees. Approval of a committee's minutes by the Full Council was often the point at which decisions were taken.

1.3.2   Following the passing of the Local Government Act 2000, the role of the Full Council meeting changed significantly. Birmingham City Council chose to operate executive arrangements (as under section 11 of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The 2000 Act set out the separate functions that are the responsibility of either the Council (non-executive)

or the Executive. Most functions and decisions were made the responsibility of the Executive (the Cabinet). Full Council now takes decisions about the overall strategic policies of the Council (known as the Policy Framework) and sets the budget, delegating matters such as licensing, planning, pensions, audit, treasury management, and staffing. Full Council also elects the Leader of the Council, and makes appointments to committees and some outside bodies.

1.3.3   The Constitution sets out the role of the Full Council meeting. In Part A, Article 10 sets out the responsibilities. In Part B, B1 – Council Standing Orders sets out the procedure at meetings of the Full Council. The Constitution is currently being reviewed and the findings from this inquiry will inform that review.

Previous Scrutiny Reviews

1.3.4   In 2005, the Co-ordinating O&S Committee conducted a review of the Role of Members and the Full Council. The key finding was that the full Council's role needed to be developed so that "full council becomes a key arena for local democracy". It was acknowledged that it was not possible to reinstate the position before 2000, whereby the City Council was the ultimate decision-maker, but that there were ways for members to make more significant contributions on key issues. This could be done by increasing accountability through the full Council, tackling issues that matter and using a set of operating procedures which supports these ends. A number of recommendations were made and implemented. Subsequent changes amended the meeting further, such as the removal of Cabinet Member reports and the addition of public questions.

1.3.5   In 2014, the Governance, Resources and Customer Services O&S Committee considered the issue of petitions to the City Council meeting and the agenda was subsequently amended to bring petitions earlier on the agenda.

1.3.6   In 2016, the Corporate Resources O&S Committee looked at the arrangements for City Council meetings and put forward a list of suggested actions for Council Business Management Committee (CBM) to consider. This inquiry included a survey of all members on City Council agenda items and timings of the meeting (17 members responded). The key finding was a clear view from members across all political parties that the Full Council meeting agenda should be meaningful and allow time for fuller discussion of policy matters, which in turn should be focused on those policy areas where the City Council has influence. In addition, key policy documents should be brought at an early stage, rather than just for ratification once agreed. This would enable all members to engage and contribute to the development of that policy document.

The Full Council Meeting Today

1.3.7   Whilst there has been some variation to the agendas of City Council meetings since 2000, there has been little significant change (see current agenda in Appendix 2). Most recently, moves have been made to strengthen the policy role of the City Council meeting as proposed by the 2014 Scrutiny Review. The Constitution was amended last year, to give members the opportunity to propose items via CBM. A forward plan is now regularly received and updated by CBM.

2 Findings

2.1 Views from Members

2.1.1 Views expressed by the members spoken to as part of this inquiry were generally characterised by frustration at the lack of genuine debate and real public interest in council meetings. As in the previous Scrutiny reviews, there was a desire to see Full Council as the place where policy is influenced, with backbenchers having meaningful participation. When asked if the Full Council helped members to help residents, the answer was generally no.

2.1.2 These findings reflected the findings of a survey of all elected members conducted by the City Council during the course of the inquiry. One of the questions posed was about satisfaction with, and usefulness of, the Full Council meeting. More than half of the members' responses (53.7%) were dissatisfied with the Full City Council Meeting in terms of helping them to do their job as a councillor; and a third (36.6%) were not satisfied with Full Council as a useful meeting to attend (see Appendix 3). Comments indicate dissatisfaction with involvement in decision-making, the usefulness of debates and involvement of the public.

2.1.3 Whilst we must acknowledge that it was not possible to reinstate the position to as it was before 2000, whereby the City Council was the ultimate decision-maker, nonetheless the findings suggest ways in which members can make more significant contributions on key issues. The three key areas emerging from the evidence were:

- More backbench engagement with strategic policy development;

- Robust and challenging means of holding the Executive, Scrutiny and others to account;

- To facilitate more meaningful backbench and public engagement.

2.2 Backbench Engagement with Policy Development

2.2.1 The Full Council's primary role is to consider and approve the Council's Policy Framework. In practice the number of documents required by statute to be approved by Full Council has decreased, and in Birmingham it is not common practice to bring policy reports to Full Council as it is in other local authorities. Often the reality is that Full Council is asked to agree select policy documents after approval by Cabinet. Recent attempts to change this have not resulted in significantly more policy documents coming to Full Council.

2.2.2 Under the Executive system adopted in 2000, policy development sits with the Executive, but with Scrutiny having an important role in supporting this. The Constitution states that Overview and Scrutiny Committees, amongst other things, "may assist the Council and / or the Executive in the development of its budget and policy by appropriate analysis of policy and budget issues". The benefits of this are that Scrutiny can explore policy options early on, challenge assumptions and

ensure evidence is robust, help secure wider ownership and buy-in to the policy, and engage with the public or service users as appropriate.

2.2.3   Members raised concerns that when Scrutiny was set up in Birmingham, it was envisaged that it would have a significant role in bringing forward ideas and proposals in relation to policy for debate. However, there are currently not the resources to do this as before, and so the role Scrutiny plays in stimulating Full Council debate has reduced. The situation now is that early policy discussion with Scrutiny is still not the norm, and fewer still policy reports proceed to Full Council.

2.2.4   Combining an ambition to restore Scrutiny's role in policy development, and the calls from members for more and better involvement of Full Council in policy, demands a change in how policy is developed in the City Council. The process of policy making needs to better involve Scrutiny as a matter of course. The point at which Scrutiny would be involved would be dependent on the policy in question and what point would add most value. Some examples are set out below:

Stage	Purpose	Examples
Horizon-scanning	To take wider view of what is happening in the city and where the Council could be doing more / less, the parameters for future policy.	Parish Councils (2017)
Pre-policy consideration	To look at what should be the scope, key principles, and/or options for major policy reviews.	From Waste to Resource Inquiry (2014)
Policy formation	Overview & Scrutiny to critique what the Executive is putting forward, including taking aspects of the policy for more in-depth investigation	Citizen Engagement (2014)
Policy comment	To look at proposed policies for "last minute" checking to inform the final version	Option to Return policy (2019)
Post-policy agreement /implementation	To provide insight on how well policy is working and impacting on outcomes or to update a policy	Tree Policy (2017)

2.2.5   This work could be initiated by Scrutiny itself (as the waste inquiry was) or proposed by the Executive. If the latter, then the Executive may consider setting out a position statement or set of proposals to inform Scrutiny's work. This would be akin to a "green/white paper" approach, as suggested by Professor Copus (see box on page 8).

2.2.6   A revised Executive/Scrutiny protocol should set out the practicalities of how this should work[1]. Where appropriate (major strategies and policies within the Council's Policy Framework), the resulting Scrutiny report would then be taken to Full Council meetings for debate, giving all members the opportunity to influence policy ahead of the Executive taking the final decision. This involvement of a wider pool of members would add to the robustness of the policy being

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[1] Following the publication of Statutory Guidance on Scrutiny (May 2019) the intention is for the City Council to develop a revised Executive/Scrutiny protocol.

developed and using Scrutiny as a means of opening up the matter would help navigate the more adversarial nature of Full Council.

A Parliamentary Approach?

At its meeting on 15th February 2019, the Co-ordinating O&S Committee heard from Professor Colin Copus, Emeritus Professor of Local Politics, De Montfort University, who presented his thoughts on how to develop the Full Council meeting based on his research.

He started by saying that there is no council that has fundamentally rethought what the Full Council meeting is about, and Birmingham has the opportunity to lead the way here.

He noted that the Local Government Act 2000 sought to introduce a parliamentary style system, bringing in an Executive with Cabinet style powers, alongside Scrutiny Committees to take on a form of the Select Committee role. But neither government nor councils considered reformulating Full Council as a form of parliament.

There are obviously some clear differences – Parliament sits daily when in session, for example. However, there are examples of other local authorities experimenting with some parliamentary style formats. For example, some have introduced green papers (setting out a policy issue for debate); and white papers (setting out the Executive's intention ahead of a decision being taken). This allows Full Council involvement at different stages of the policy debate rather than just at the end when the decision has in effect been made.

Another idea has been to use a form of early day motion, to allow members to lay down topics of concern, not necessarily to debate them at the meeting but to raise issues of concern.[2]

Another idea is to have a Speaker instead of a Chair of the Council (in Birmingham's case, the Lord Mayor), with the role of championing the role of Full Council with the Executive. However, this has not been particularly successful elsewhere, as the move was in effect little more than a change in title.

Other practices have included having a "state of the borough" address setting out the success or otherwise of policies to generate debate; or single issue debates.

He suggested that to get genuine debate and for Full Council to achieve real influence however, a challenge is needed to some of the common practices employed here and elsewhere. For example, councils could reflect on the party group system, whereby many areas of policy are determined in private group meetings ahead of public consideration, and that can be where the real debate takes place. Bringing some of this to the Full Council arena would be one way to reinvigorate the meeting.

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[2] Early day motions (EDMs) are motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons for which no day has been fixed. As there is no specific time allocated to EDMs very few are debated. However, many attract a great deal of public interest and media coverage. By attracting the signatures of other MPs, they can be used to demonstrate the level of parliamentary support for a particular cause or point of view.
https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/edms/

2.3 Holding to Account

2.3.1 The City Council's Constitution states that one of the roles of Full Council is to hold to public account the Members of the Executive, Overview & Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees.

The Executive

2.3.2 On the whole, members felt that oral questions to Cabinet Members worked well and was one of the more successful areas of Full Council that allows backbenchers and opposition parties to hold the Executive to account in a vital and public way. However, this worked less well when it came to the more significant decisions as reports on topical issues are rarely brought, and questioning on a single topic can be difficult as the order depends on the order in which the Lord Mayor calls members to speak.

2.3.3 In the past, Birmingham had Cabinet Members report individually to Full Council, with an annual report. Whilst there was some appetite for that to return, others held the view that these could too easily turn into a list of things the Cabinet Member had done, rather than an accountability session. This also did not facilitate holding the Executive to account *collectively* for their decisions.

2.3.4 The officers who gave evidence, all of whom have come to Birmingham within the last two years, gave evidence of approaches taken elsewhere that included regular (for example quarterly) reports of the Executive, collectively reporting back on recent business and collectively being held to account through questioning.

2.3.5 These are termed *Executive Business Reports* or *Proceedings of the Executive* in other local authorities; and content might include updates on the progress of key policies or decisions, significant budget updates, response to recent events and other local issues. If introduced here, the reports should not simply become a vehicle for good news but be a way of Full Council holding the Executive to account on progress, and so such reports must include an honest appraisal of transformation and improvement issues, risks and challenges (including any delays, overspends etc) as well as celebrating what has gone well and where improvement has been made. In order to ensure a balanced approach, these reports should be accompanied by a Scrutiny commentary that reflects any Scrutiny findings on the matters referenced. This way of reporting would be a means of involving Full Council and giving a wider ownership to the improvement/priorities agenda.

2.3.6 The proposal is that this approach is trialled in Birmingham starting in the September 2019 (with a view to moving to four a year in June, September, January and April). The Co-ordinating O&S Committee should have a role in advising the Executive of matters that should be addressed.

2.3.7 How they are debated in Full Council is also important. There should be an opportunity for proper questioning of the Cabinet Members, not just statements to be made and the Executive will give consideration to how these are presented preferably with Cabinet Members other than the Leader

and Deputy Leader taking the lead (as they are subject to most detailed questioning and present most reports currently at Full Council).

Overview & Scrutiny

2.3.8 Full Council also has the role of holding Scrutiny to account for the work that they are doing. Currently O&S Committees report to Full Council with individual inquiries. An Annual Report is presented in the summer. And whilst it is possible for members to ask O&S Chairs questions under oral questions, in practice this rarely happens. This means that not all O&S committees report to Full Council in a year and there is little visibility of a lot of work that O&S does.

2.3.9 The convention of O&S reporting to Full Council is a good one – indeed this is one area where Birmingham leads other councils.[3] However, the reliance on inquiry reports at a time when the demands on Scrutiny are to be more responsive with quicker turn-around times, and large complex agendas, alongside the reduction in resources, does mean that the number of reports has dropped off in recent years. Also as these focus on single topics, the range of work O&S undertakes is not represented nor does every committee take a report every year.

2.3.10 There are ways to address this, for example by making more use of a short, debate report approach (such as the Health and Social Care O&S Committee used when taking a report on the STP (December 2016)). These are short reports summarising work undertaken in committee meetings (or on visits); not necessarily with recommendations but with a motion or suggested actions; this could include more contentious issues, or where policy is not yet resolved, and act as a way of prompting wider policy debate in Full Council

2.3.11 One option would be to adopt a similar approach as proposed for the Executive, with a *Scrutiny Business Report*. This would cover what work the committees had done over the period and what impact that had had. This could follow the pattern adopted by the Executive with Scrutiny providing a summary of work relating to that theme. Again this would enable Full Council to hold Scrutiny to account collectively.

Joint Arrangements and External Partners

2.3.12 A number of members also raised the accountability of those members who represent the City Council on outside bodies or joint committees. Currently there is a lack of effective reporting between council and key bodies such as the West Midlands Combined Authority. There is no opportunity for members representing the Council on other bodies to report back to the Full Council, unless they are asked an oral or written question (unlike other local authorities – see Appendix 5).

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[3] The Communities and Local Government Select Committee published its report on the Effectiveness of local authority Overview and Scrutiny committees on 11 December 2017. One of its recommendations was that Overview and Scrutiny committees should report to an authority's Full Council meeting rather than to the executive, mirroring the relationship between Select Committees and Parliament.

2.3.13   There is support for some form of accountability for key partnerships and bodies (e.g. Combined Authority, Police and Crime Panel etc).

2.3.14   From a City Council perspective, matters relating to the Combined Authority and other significant partnerships should be included in the Executive reports to Full Council (see above). For others, the option of a slot for those appointed to WMCA Scrutiny, Transport Delivery Committee, Fire Authority/Mayoral Fire Advisory Committee, GBSLEP Scrutiny, Police and Crime Panel was suggested. These need not be annual but either on a "as requested" basis or spread over the four year term.

2.3.15   Members recalled when the Chief Constable used to present annually to the Full Council, and how that was a useful debate to have. However, governance models have changed since then and we now have an elected mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner, neither of who report to any Full Council meeting in the West Midlands. Rather they report to the WMCA Joint Scrutiny Committee and West Midlands Police and Crime Panel respectively, and therefore it should be members who sit on these bodies that report to Full Council. There could still be the option for a debate with the West Midlands Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner in response to specific incidents or issues (for example such as when a Full Council debate was held following the riots in Birmingham in 2011). It is suggested this is piloted after the election.

2.4   Widening Backbench Member Engagement

2.4.1   Most of the Full Council agenda is currently initiated by members in formal roles – the Executive, Scrutiny etc. Currently the only opportunity for backbench members to put issues on the agenda is through motions for debate.

2.4.2   Views were varied on motions for debate. It was noted that motions often become adversarial as the nature of motions means that one side must put forward a position to vote for or against. Members had mixed views on how tightly motions should be defined: some were of the view that they should be focused on matters that the City Council can determine or influence, whilst others felt that there was a role for Full Council to have a view on what affected their residents and respond to national events. The recent motion on Brexit (November 2018) exemplified this, with some seeing this as an important issue affecting residents that should be reflected in Full Council debates, whilst others viewed it as something that cannot be directly affected by the City Council and therefore should not be debated.

2.4.3   Members considered a number of options in relation to backbench engagement. Retaining motions is one idea, but given the time available the recommendation will be that the number is restricted to two per Full Council meeting, on rotation between the political groups. There should also be an option to put forward a matter for debate without a motion attached, so as to allow important issues to be debated and responded to (for example knife crime) to shape the City Council response to these matters, without it having to be attached to a particular position.

2.4.4   Another option is to make use of the **Early Day Motion (EDM)** idea, whereby members could put forward motions to raise issues of concern in Birmingham. In Parliament, many of these EDMs attract a great deal of public interest and media coverage. By attracting the signatures of other members, they can be used to demonstrate the level of support for a particular cause or point of view.

2.4.5   To make this work in Birmingham, the list of EDMs would be compiled ahead of the meeting and circulated on the day of Full Council, so that members could pick up any issues during Question Time, or members could adopt an EDM for a future motion for debate.

2.5   Public Involvement

2.5.1   Views on involving the public were mixed. That the Full Council does not lend itself to public participation and was not very easy to understand was a common view. However, no clear view emerged as to whether Full Council should be made more accessible, or whether other routes were more appropriate for public engagement.

2.5.2   Questions from members of the public were introduced in 2012. A number of members were of the view that this did not work very well as questioners have to submit their question in advance and the Cabinet Member reads a pre-prepared response which has been prepared for them by officers. It is therefore not a genuine question and answer exercise. Also, many members of the public cannot attend during the working day.

2.5.3   Others felt that although the benefit was limited, it was important to have the public voice heard at the meeting and that to remove it would be a retrograde step.

2.5.4   Research conducted by officers last year found that the experience of those asking questions was mixed. Some felt it was very constructive, that they got a positive response and that it was an important way of focusing both Cabinet and Scrutiny on public concerns. Others complained that the formality of the meeting was unhelpful, no feedback was received, and they also commented that by asking the questions from the public gallery, most of the Chamber have their backs to the questioner.

2.5.5   Whilst clearly problematic, Birmingham's approach is typical of many local authorities but if genuine public engagement is the aim then other avenues must be explored. Members were of the view that public questions are not working as envisaged when introduced and therefore the approach needs refreshing, or an alternative format for public interaction needs to be considered, either separate to the Full Council meeting or changing the timing to the end of the meeting so that more public can attend.. This will be picked up as part of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee's future inquiry on citizen engagement.

2.5.6   Another idea that would need further exploration would be the option to use a Full Council meeting slot to hold single issue debates, rather than a formal meeting. That could encompass a

wider range of speakers, including perhaps members of the public. However, more work would be needed to explore how this would be done and what outcomes would result.

2.5.7 As the inquiry focused on the Full Council meetings, members did not consider in depth the many other ways in which the public could engage with or participate in council matters. An earlier Scrutiny Inquiry focused on Citizen Engagement, but not all the recommendations were implemented. It is proposed that the Co-ordinating O&S Committee look at this in more detail, linking with ideas for how a genuinely participative process for policy making could be explored, perhaps on the Highbury Conference model and involving a citizen's jury, to develop green papers/white papers, facilitating "bottom-up" policy making. This would encompass an assessment of public questions and how these might be improved.

2.6 Full Council Proceedings

2.6.1 Members also had a number of views on how Full Council was conducted. The combative nature of Full Council was noted, which some found enjoyable but others said it took a lot of time and energy for little result.

2.6.2 There were varied views on the formalities of Full Council. Some felt it demeaned the Chamber to, for example, have to ask permission to remove jackets, and that this could detract from the importance of the issues discussed. Others felt that the formalities gave proceedings a significance and authority.

2.6.3 The timing of the meeting was not raised as a major issue, and when asked about it in the Annual Member Survey, those members who responded tended to prefer afternoon/evening slots (43.2%) with 25% preferring the morning. A fifth (20.4%) had no preference. The Committee therefore makes no recommendation on the days or times of the meeting, though some proposed holding a longer meeting (with refreshments for sale) to enable more business to be considered.

2.6.4 The key issue regarding timing was about what should happen to time allocated to an item but not used for that item, for example if oral questions were to last for fewer than the 90 minutes allocated. It is therefore proposed that the Lord Mayor should be given discretion to allocate unused time to the next item, with the proviso that each item should start no later than the time indicated on the agenda.

2.6.5 The following points were made in relation to proceedings, and are recommended for change in the Constitution:

- Petitions – there should be a stricter time limit on speaking, so that members are not making speeches;

- Speaking conventions: it is proposed that the Leader of the Opposition be called first to put their question at oral questions (as would happen in Parliament) with the leaders of other parties also called;

- Council should rarely receive any reports 'for noting'; some felt this to be a waste of time. Information reports could be distributed to members directly outside meetings, if there is no recommendation with a decision to be made then there is no value in taking up time on the agenda;

- Motion: given the time available, the number of motions per meeting should be restricted to two – which goes back to the convention of previous years when a third motion was rarely submitted;

- Order of amendments to motions: it is right that these should be taken in the order received, but at the Annual Budget meeting, the main opposition group's amendment should be taken first;

- A number of the non-executive functions that sit with City Council are delegated to Council Business Management Committee (CBM). Members agreed that there should be a committee with delegated non-executive functions, but no specific comments were made on how this should be constituted. However, given the role CBM has in relation to the Full Council agenda, the Committee proposes that the Chair of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee should be a member of CBM so both Scrutiny and Executive members have some influence over the agenda.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Summary of Conclusions

3.1.1 Evidence collected by the Committee showed some significant dissatisfaction with the current Full Council meeting, broadly centred on backbencher's lack of meaningful engagement in setting the strategic direction of the City Council. To be a stimulus for a healthy local democracy, the Full Council needs to be a forum for genuine debate and deliberation, tackling issues that matter and robustly holding the Executive and Scrutiny to account. These findings echoed findings of earlier reviews and also resonated with newer members of the Council.

3.1.2 The Committee has therefore set out a series of recommendations for discussion by Full Council.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 Full council is asked to agree the following:

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	That realignment takes place between the Executive, Scrutiny and Full Council with regards to strategic policy development, to give Scrutiny and Full Council a stronger policy role as set out in paragraph 2.2.4 to 2.2.6. A process for ensuring that strategic policy development is channelled more effectively through Scrutiny should be developed as part of the revised Executive/Scrutiny protocol. This will enable backbenchers to engage in shaping major strategic policies at an early stage, and have a stronger opportunity to properly shape and influence the strategic direction of City Council policy.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
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R05	That the Full Council agenda is amended in light of the above changes, as set out in Appendix 4.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R06	That the Lead members appointed to regional bodies (such as the West Midlands Combined Authority Joint Scrutiny Committee; the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel and the Transport Delivery Group) are asked to report and take questions at Full Council meetings.	Leader (with Chair of Co-ordinating O&S Committee)	November 2019
R07	That Standing Orders should be amended to: • Ensure that the Leader of the Opposition be called first to put their question at oral questions (as would happen in Parliament) with the leaders of other groups also called at some point in the session. • Ensure that at the Annual Budget meeting, the main opposition group's amendment should be taken first; • That Motions for Debate are retained but that the number is restricted to two per Full Council meeting, on rotation between the political groups; • Pilot a system of Early Day Motions, (as set out in section 2.4 above); • That the Lord Mayor be given discretion to allocate unused time to the next item, with the proviso that each item should start no later than the time indicated on the agenda.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R08	That the membership of Council Business Management Committee be amended to include the Chair of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee.	Leader (with Council Business Management Committee)	November 2019
R09	That an assessment of progress against the recommendations in this report be presented to the Co-ordinating O&S Committee.	Leader	January 2020

Appendix 1: Contributors

Cllr Ian Ward, Leader of the Council

Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council

Cllr Alex Aitken

Cllr Olly Armstrong

Cllr Nicky Brennan

Cllr Kath Hartley

Cllr Meirion Jenkins

Cllr Julien Pritchard

Cllr Lou Robson

Dawn Baxendale, Chief Executive

Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive

Clive Heaphy, Chief Finance Officer,

Professor Colin Copus

Appendix 2: Current Full Council Agenda as set out in the Constitution

| Standard Item	Time Limits	Indicative Timetable
Minutes, Lord Mayor's Announcements Lord Mayor's Annual report (AGM only)	10 minutes for Lord Mayor's Announcements - and <u>no</u> <u>presentations</u>. 15 minutes	2.00 – 2.10 p.m.
Petitions A schedule of outstanding petitions will be available electronically	15 minutes	2.10 – 2.25 p.m.
Question time	90 minutes	2.25 – 3.55 p.m.
Questions from members of the public to any Cabinet Member or Ward Forum Chair.	20 minutes 1 minute for each question 2 minutes for each answer	
Questions from any Councillor to a Committee Chair, Lead Member of a Joint Board or Ward Forum Chair. Each Councillor may ask only one question. No supplementary questions.	20 minutes 1 minute for each question 2 minutes for each answer	
Questions from Councillors other than Cabinet Members to a Cabinet Member. Each Councillor may ask one question and one supplementary question.	25 minutes 1 minute for each question 3 minutes for each answer	
Questions from Councillors other than Cabinet Members to the Leader or Deputy Leader. Each Councillor may ask one question and one supplementary question.	25 minutes 1 minute for each question 3 minutes for each answer	
Appointments	5 minutes	3.55 – 4.00 p.m.
Policy Plans or Reports from CBM	15 minutes	4.00 – 4.15 p.m.
Adjournment Break	30 minutes	4.15 – 4.45 p.m.
Overview & Scrutiny Committee reports	60 minutes	4..45 – 5.45 p.m.
Motions submitted by individual Councillors rotated equally between the political groups as determined by CBM	90 minutes If a meeting has not been concluded by 7.15pm any remaining motions or amendments will be moved and seconded formally (without comment) and be put to the vote without discussion.	5.45 – 7.15 p.m.

Appendix 3: Annual Member Survey Results (Full Council meeting)

A survey of all members was conducted in December 2018/January 2019. Amongst the questions, members were asked: *How satisfied are you that the full City Council meeting:*

- *helps me do my job as a councillor*

- *is a useful meeting to attend*

Full Council /meetings: I am satisfied that the full City Council Meeting:

Helps me do my job as a councillor
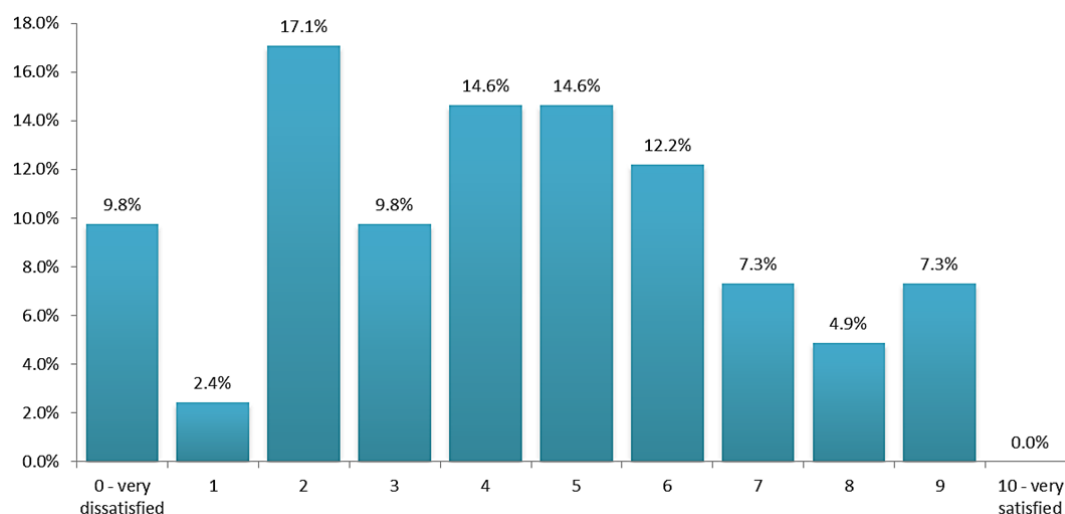
41 councillors responded to this question.

More than half of councillor responses (53.7%) showed some level of dissatisfaction with the Full City Council Meeting in terms of helping them to do their job as a councillor. The Full Council has responsibility for all Non-Executive functions and approving the policy framework and budget; decisions made at full council cascade through to the roles and responsibilities of councillors.

Is a useful meeting to attend
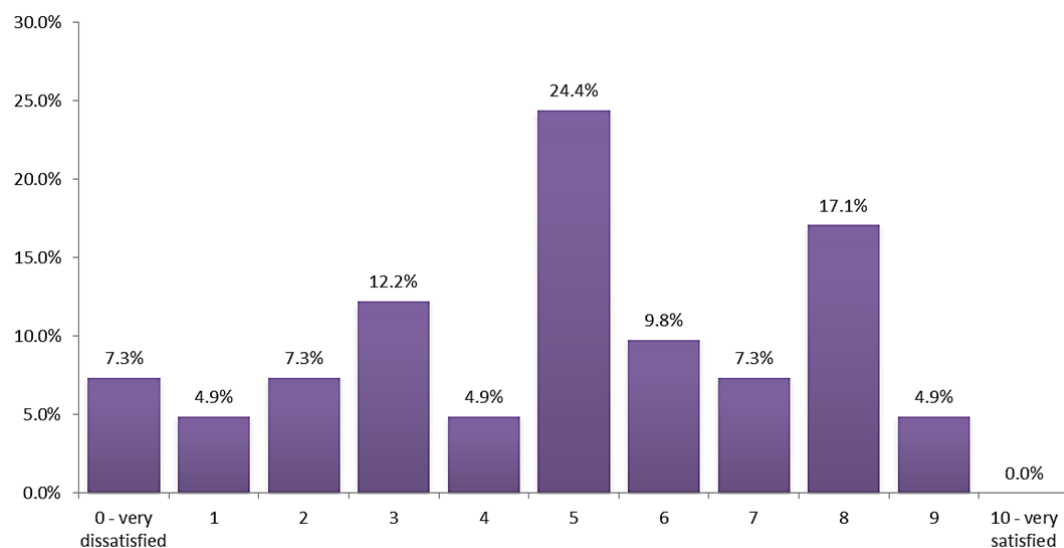
41 councillors responded to this question.

Full council is where significant decisions are made. A very similar proportion of councillors showed some level of dissatisfaction as satisfaction that full council is a useful meeting, 36.6% and 39% consecutively. One in four councillors (24.4%) was neither dissatisfied nor satisfied.

Appendix 4: Proposed Full Council Agenda

Standard Item	Time Limits	Indicative Timetable
Minutes, Lord Mayor's Announcements	10 minutes for Lord Mayor's Announcements - no presentations.	2.00 – 2.10 p.m.
Petitions	10 minutes	2.10 – 2.20 p.m.
Holding to Account		
Question time	70 minutes	2.20 – 3.30 p.m.
	Questions from members of the public to any Cabinet Member or Ward Forum Chair[4].	20 minutes 1 minute for each question 2 minutes for each answer
	Questions from any Councillor to a Committee Chair, Lead Member of a Joint Board or Ward Forum Chair.[4]	10 minutes 1 minute for each question 2 minutes for each answer
	Questions from Councillors other than Cabinet Members to a Cabinet Member. [5]	20 minutes 1 minute for each question 3 minutes for each answer
	Questions from Councillors other than Cabinet Members to the Leader or Deputy Leader.[5]	20 minutes 1 minute for each question 3 minutes for each answer
Executive Business Report / Scrutiny Business Report / Lead Member Report	45 minutes 7 minutes presentation 4 minutes per speaker 5 minutes to respond	3.30 – 4.15 p.m.
BREAK (the Lord Mayor should have the flexibility to call this earlier or later as the meeting progresses)		4.15 – 4.45 p.m.
Policy Development / Council Business		
Policy Framework Plans; inquiry reports from Scrutiny; reports from CBM or the Executive; appointments; petitions debate	60 minutes 7 minutes presentation 4 minutes per speaker 5 minutes to respond	4.45 – 5.45 p.m.
Members' Debate		
Motions submitted by individual Councillors rotated equally between the political groups as determined by CBM	Motions for debate – 7 minutes presentation 4 minutes per speaker 5 minutes to respond	5.45 – 7.15 p.m.

[4] Where the Chair is not a councillor, the question may be directed to the ward councillor to answer on behalf of the resident Chair.
[5] Each Councillor may ask one question and one supplementary question

Proposed Schedule for Executive Business Improvement Reports and Scrutiny Business Reports

	Executive Business Improvement Reports	Scrutiny Business Reports
May	Annual Meeting	
June	√	
July		√
September	√ (1 of)	
November		√
December		
January	√	
February (1)		√
February (2)	Budget meeting	
April	√	

Appendix 5: Summary of Core City Full Council Agenda Items

(Excluding constitution, minutes, appointments, announcements – that would be common to all council meetings.)

Full Council Meeting Agenda Items (Excluding constitution, minutes, appointments, announcements – that would be common to all council meetings.)

LA	Questions from members	Notice of Motions	Public questions	Petitions	Reports from Executive (some examples)	O&S	Other reports (some examples)
Sheffield	√	√	√	√	HRA budget and accounts		Standards / Audit annual reports External presentations[1]
Nottingham	√	√	√	√	• Homelessness prevention • Crime and Drugs partnership plan • Procurement Strategy • Delegation of community waste from Derby CC to Nottingham CC	Annual report	
Newcastle	√	√	√	√	Cabinet Member updates	Annual report	Audit Committee / Standards / Public Health annual report
Leeds	√	√		Deputations	• Safer Leeds community strategy • Leeds Core Strategy Selective Review • hildren and Young People's Plan refresh • Community governance review	Annual report	Planning / Community committee / Standards Annual Report Minutes HWB

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[1] For example January 2019: a presentation by Miatta Fahnbulleh, Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation, and James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, on the impact of austerity on the city of Sheffield

LA	Questions from members	Notice of Motions	Public questions	Petitions	Reports from Executive (some examples)	O&S	Other reports (some examples)
Liverpool	√	√	√	√	Establishment of Local Authority Housing Company Fair City Policy Statement		
Bristol		√	√	Petitions received, also petition debates	Youth Mayors and youth council Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy Corporate Parenting Strategy		LGO annual report
Manchester	√ To Exec and Combined Autority, Joint Committees and Joint arrangements	√		√	Proceedings of the Executive Report on Devolution	Note minutes	Standards Annual Report