APPENDIX B

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4" align="center">MAYOR & CABINET</td></tr>
<tr><td>Report Title</td><td colspan="3">Response to Matters Referred by the Sustainable Development Select Committee – Communications to Councillors</td></tr>
<tr><td>Key Decision</td><td>No</td><td></td><td>Item No. 10</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ward</td><td colspan="3">All</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contributors</td><td colspan="3">Executive Director for Resources (Head of Business & Committee and Head of Technology & Transformation)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Class</td><td>Part 1</td><td colspan="2">Date: 8 October 2008</td></tr>
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1   **Summary**

This report formulates a response to the matters arising from the Sustainable Development Select Committee report.

2   **Purpose of the Report**

To respond and make recommendations to matters referred to Mayor & Cabinet by the Sustainable Development Select Committee's report on communications to councillors.

3   **Policy Context**

The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework documents and reflect the corporate priority commitments -
- 'clean, green and liveable' (through the conservation of resources), and;
- 'community leadership and empowerment' (by improving access to information for elected public representatives).

The recommendations further support the aspirations of the Sustainable Community Strategy, particularly the priority outcomes 'empowered and responsible' and 'clean, green and liveable'.

4   **Recommendations**

That the Mayor agrees:

(1) The responses shown in Section 5 of the report be reported to the Sustainable Development Select Committee; and

(2) The Constitution Working Party be invited to consider any changes required to the Constitution.

5.   **Response to Matters raised**

5.1 *The survey concludes that of those that responded, the majority of Members are keen to receive more information electronically, with the stipulation that members can opt for their preferred method of communication. Although a large number of members welcomed the idea of obtaining meeting papers such as agendas and minutes electronically, members are still in support of receiving this information in*

hard copy to be able to take to meetings. **The Committee recommends that councillors continue to receive agendas in paper format for full council and committees they sit on, but with the option to request that they only receive agendas via electronic means. Any other agendas, including notification of meetings, should be sent electronically. These options should be subject to constant review.**

Response : All members of the Council have been canvassed regarding their individual preferences for the receipt of agendas and to date eleven have asked that all, or some of the agendas they receive should be sent electronically.

Councillors opting for electronic delivery will continue to receive a hard copy summons and an order of business for each meeting delivered to their home address as these are required legally and by the Council's Constitution.

Members are able to opt in or out of electronic delivery at their discretion by notifying Governance Support and the take up and popularity of this new option can therefore be kept under continuous review.

5.2   *In addition, the Committee recommends that the weekly calendar sheet and Homesearch information provided to councillors should be sent electronically with links to the council's website and/or Sharepoint site to access this information, with the option for councillors to receive via paper copy on request. This should be subject to constant review. In addition, notification of planning applications within a member's ward should also be sent electronically.*

Response : The level and volume of documentation produced outside the central Governance Support Unit is hard to quantify, as in a complex organisation such as a borough council, even internally, there are a very large number of business units which submit written documentation directly to councillors on a regular basis. The Select Committee has highlighted only a fraction of the correspondence involved. Advice has been sought from the Civic Support Manager responsible for the council's central post room and she has commenced a survey of all internally generated correspondence sent to Councillors over a one month period. From mid August to mid September, an additional copy will be taken of all mass mailings sent to councillors and at the end of this period the documentation will be reviewed. It is envisaged the generators of all mail shots not required by law or relating directly to legally constituted council meetings will be asked to dispatch future mailings electronically and provide member with the option of receiving hard copies on request.

5.3   *The Committee notes the potential to save staff time and resources in implementing the recommendations at 5.1 and 5.2. Electronic communication reduces not just the flow of paper but also printing, postage and courier service costs.*

Response : Officers predict there will be some marginal savings in central printing costs but that the operation of two dispatch methods, a traditional hard copy and an electronic copy, for the same agenda, add a level of complexity that will lead to increased calls on staff time in the Governance Support Unit, the Regeneration Directorate's committee services section and within the central post room operated by Property Services.

5.4   *The survey was helpful in identifying how individual members want to receive information; however communication methods need to be flexible in order to meet the varying communication needs of a diverse group of councillors.* **The Committee**

recommends that officers respond to individual councillors in the same format to which the councillors correspond with, unless otherwise stated.

Response : All Executive Directors can be advised of this requirement and asked to ensure it is implemented

5.5   *The Committee notes that current provision complies with the Council's Constitution (see para. 4.17) within Part 4 paras 24 & 25, regarding the provisions for notice of Council meetings and matters of urgency.*

Response : Officers will continue to ensure the requirements of the Constitution are met and will critically examine areas such as the publication of notices of meetings where the council's custom and practice exceeds constitutional requirements.

5.6   *The majority of members who responded to the survey cited poor connection, delays in repairing faults, and difficulties in navigating the Council's website as barriers to preventing access to and use of electronic means of communication.* **The Committee recommends that the council considers reviewing and carrying out development work on its IT systems, including Sharepoint, to improve how information is made accessible and presented on the council website.**

Response : There is a project in place to rebuild the council website on an entirely new technology platform for delivery during next financial year. This will necessarily involve a redesign of navigability and search tools to make the website easier to use.

5.7   *Some members who responded to the survey identified they were keen to use Sharepoint, but were not familiar with its functions and how to use it to its full potential.* **The Committee recommends that further training on the use of Sharepoint and navigating the council website is made available to councillors.**

Response : Officers are developing a new 'blended learning' approach to ICT training, including use of SharePoint. Typically this includes the e-learning and Change Champion arrangement that have been extensively used in the SharePoint rollout to officers. The e-learning tools are available for use by members and officers will ensure members are directed to the same. Members who are not at ease with this form of learning can individually raise the issue as a need in their personal member development plan.

5.8   *The Committee notes that in improving access to information for councillors, this will also improve access to information for members of the public.*

Response : The Council has made a substantial commitment to Member Development and supports developments that enhance access to information and the representational role.

6.   Financial Implications:

6.1   The Sustainable Development Select Committee has suggested a number of initiatives for consideration and it is believed these will be cost neutral. Any significant budget variations would be reported to the Mayor.

7.   Crime and Disorder Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report**.**

8.   Equalities Implications

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report. However, it is incumbent upon the Council to be responsive to the diverse needs of Councillors and members of the public in ensuring that information is accessible. In that respect, the recommendation within this report is fully in line with current commitments relating to the provision of agendas, minutes and reports in alternative formats, as appropriate.

9. Environmental Implications

Any measures taken to reduce the global use of paper will save trees, water and energy. Reductions in the demand for paper will help preserve forests and reduce greenhouse gases and would therefore be in accord with the commitments made by the Mayor in July 2008 when he agreed the Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Strategy.

10. Legal Implications

The Council's constitution provides for a summons to attend the meeting, to be left at or sent by post to the members' usual place of residence. The member may change the address for delivery by appropriately notifying the proper officer.

Changes to the Council's constitution can only be agreed by full Council. The CWP was established to advise the Council on any change to the constitution, and it is proposed that this issue be referred to the next meeting of the CWP.

11. Further Information

11.1   For further information please contact Kevin Flaherty on 0208 3149327 or Simon Berlin on 0208 3146999

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Sustainable Development Select Committee 2008 – available from the Scrutiny Section 0208 3147443