

COUNCIL MEETING SEPTEMBER 2010

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE CABINET SYSTEM

Advantages of Executive	Advantages of Committee
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More responsive to changing events 2. More responsibility for portfolio holders to drive policy and direction by presentation of reports 3. More checks and balances through enhanced scrutiny and review 4. Common system of government with partner authorities 5. Meetings held in public 6. Opportunities for other Members and guests to inform debate 7. Better foundation for shared service working with other councils who share the same model 8. Greater confidence for portfolio holders in representing the Council 9. Key issues such as budgets, corporate policy and Planning policy will continue to be determined by full Council 10. Regulation such as development control and licensing will continue as they are now in Committees 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the advantage of familiarity 2. All Members are involved in the decision making process 3. Meetings held in public 4. Opportunities for other members and guests to inform debate 5. Officers present reports 6. Delegation to officers enabling Committees to concentrate on major items 7. Key issues such as budgets, corporate policy and Planning policy will continue to be determined by full Council 8. Regulation such as development control and licensing are in Committees
Shortcomings of Executive	Shortcomings of Committee
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finding a role for backbenchers 2. Perception of decisions behind closed doors 3. Concentration of power 4. Not accountable 5. Not transparent 6. Less of a role for town and parish councils 7. Less scrutiny of decisions 8. Lack of opportunity for debate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow system that cannot respond to a changing world 2. Few councils operate a committee system and it is not easy to interpret government policy which is predicated around a cabinet model 3. Need to refer to other committees slows process and can inhibit policy direction 4. Not an obvious role for town and parish councils in current structure other than DC 5. Weak scrutiny because Committees think they provide their own 6. Officer-led

HOW TO ADDRESS SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CABINET SYSTEM

Cabinet shortcomings	How they may be addressed
Finding a role for all members	Regulatory committees will continue as will scrutiny and review committee(s), the role of which will of necessity be enhanced. Working and Task Groups will continue. The role of the area forums could be enhanced
Perception of decisions behind closed doors	Cabinets are held in public. Fears that decisions could be open to whipping are equally applicable to the committee system. Elected Members will have a far greater role in the formulation and presentation of policy. Cabinet may invite members and guests to participate in debate. The forward plan will ensure full awareness of forthcoming decisions, and the opportunity to participate
Concentration of power	Checks and balances will be built into the system. "Pre-scrutiny" of initiatives will increase of necessity, allowing for community engagement in decision making
Not accountable	All Members will remain accountable to their electorates and will engage during their terms of office as they see fit
Not transparent	As above. Transparency of decision is not necessarily built in to the committee system and this is a cultural issue. Failure to make transparent decisions will have ultimate sanction in the courts, through the inspection of the planning process and the Ombudsman and Audit Commission, as it does now.
Less of a role for town and parish councils	The involvement of town and parish councils would continue as at present. Most engagement takes place through the DC Committee and the area forums. Enhancement of that involvement is an issue whichever route the Council takes
Less scrutiny of decisions	Scrutiny would be enhanced
Lack of opportunity for debate	All major policy decisions would continue to be dealt with by full Council, and the regulatory committees (which regularly attract the highest numbers of members of the public) would continue.