



Subject:	Party Leaders' Forum
Date:	22 nd September, 2017
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider the Notice of Motion referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 4 th September and to take such action as may be determined.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Give guidance on the future administrative arrangements for meetings of the Party Leaders' Forum (options at 3.5).

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Council, at its meeting on 4th September, considered the following Notice of Motion which was proposed by Councillor Long and seconded by Councillor O’Neill:</p> <p><i>“This Council calls upon the Chief Executive to submit a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on how to ensure openness and transparency with regard to decisions taken by the Party Leaders’ Forum.”</i></p>
3.2	<p>In accordance with Standing Order 13(f) the motion was referred to the Committee for consideration.</p>
3.3	<p>In order to assist the Committee in considering the matter, it might be helpful to set out the background to the establishment of the Party Leaders’ Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the previous Council, prior to the local elections in 2014, the Council had agreed to establish a Party Leaders’ Forum to allow space for Party Leaders to discuss difficult or contentious issues without Council Officers routinely being present. As such, those meetings were facilitated by Jonathan Huish and officers were asked to attend parts of the meetings when specific issues pertinent to their remit were to be discussed. A short note of those meetings was reported to the Committee for information. • The Committee, at its meeting on 22nd August 2014, agreed to re-establish a number of Working Groups for the new Council and these included the Party Leaders’ Forum and the Budget and Transformation Panel. The rationale for appointing the two Groups was that the Budget and Transformation Panel was exclusively a business meeting when Chief Officers would bring draft reports to the Panel’s attention prior to them being submitted to Committee, whereas the Party Leaders’ Forum was to provide a space for Party Leaders to discuss more contentious matters and to seek to come to accommodations where there was disagreement. • It was always understood that, as with all Working Groups, neither the Budget and Transformation Panel nor the Party Leaders’ Forum were decision-making bodies and all decisions were required to be taken by a Standing Committee and (except where the Committee had full delegated authority) ratified by full Council.
3.4	<p>Currently, there are officers present at meetings of the Budget and Transformation Panel and a minute is taken of the meeting and presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. Since Jonathan Huish no longer provides the administrative</p>

3.5	<p>support to the Party Leaders' Forum, there is not any officer tasked with attending those meetings and taking a minute of the discussions. Therefore, there is not any report of those discussions included on the agenda of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.</p> <p>It would appear that there are essentially two options open to the Committee in deciding how best to proceed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accept that the Party Leaders' Forum is primarily established to allow Party Leaders' to discuss issues in confidence and without any officers present. The meetings would therefore continue without a minute being taken and there would not be any report on the discussions submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; or 2. Agree that an officer would be present at the meetings of the Party Leaders' Forum for the purpose of producing a short note or minute of the discussions which would then be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the same way that the meetings of the Budget and Transformation Panel are treated. <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.6	<p>There are not any financial or resource implications associated with this report.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are not any equality or good relations considerations associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None