



<b>Subject:</b>	Budget and Transformation Panel & Party Leaders' Forum: Refreshed Names and Terms of Reference
<b>Date:</b>	21 June 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider whether to establish, as a successor to the Budget and Transformation Panel, a Party Leaders' Consultative Panel and to re-establish the Party Leaders' Forum subject to the suggested remit, arrangements and conventions as set out in the report.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Agree to establish the fora as set out in the report to enable better communication and dialogue on strategic and/or political/controversial issues.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Budget and Transformation Panel was established by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee and terms of reference agreed in March 2009 to provide political leadership

	<p>and oversight of the Council's efficiency and transformation agenda and the Council's finances in general. It comprised one representative from each political party grouping plus the Chair of Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee however currently, it is attended by the Party Leaders and the Chair of Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee. It meets every month on the week before the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee meeting. Secretariat is provided by the Strategic Performance Manager.</p>
3.2	<p>As a Working Group, it is not decision-making and its minutes are brought to Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee. It provides a forum for officers to discuss issues with Members to get their initial views and ensure that the appropriate level of information is provided to Members to support the formal decision-making process at Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee. No formal recommendations are made to Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee as issues are subsequently taken to Committee for decision.</p>
3.3	<p>The Party Leaders' Forum was established in 2011 as part of strategic planning process which led to the development of the Council's Investment Programme. It evolved to become a safe space in which politically sensitive issues could be discussed. It was established to be led by Members with officers present only at the request of Members. It was originally externally facilitated however secretariat is now provided by the Chief Executive's Support Manager. It meets every month the week after the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee meeting.</p>
3.4	<p>Again, as a Working Group, it is not decision-making and its minutes are circulated among the Party Leaders. No formal terms of reference were agreed and it currently operates under the same <a href="#">terms of reference</a> of the Budget and Transformation Panel.</p>
3.5	<p>Both of these fora have operated successfully to act as a clearing house for potential complex reports going to Committee and/or to provide a safe space in which discussions may take place on political, confidential or contentious issues. Other Councils have followed Belfast City Council's decision to establish such fora and they are now the accepted norm within governance frameworks.</p>
3.6	<p>As part of the planning for the new governance arrangements for the new council, it was agreed at Strategic Policy &amp; Resources in April 2019 to retain these working groups and refresh their names and terms of references.</p>

3.7	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><u>Budget and Transformation Panel</u></p> <p>Following consultation with Members at Budget and Transformation Panel last week, the following name is proposed as an option: Party Leaders' Consultative Panel.</p> <p>The suggested remit of the Party Leaders' Consultative Panel would be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To receive briefings and updates on the Council's programmes of work relating to the Belfast Agenda priorities.</li> <li>• To support the development and implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan and associated programmes of work.</li> <li>• To introduce complex or sensitive reports/issues or proposed reports prior to committee or to discuss issues arising from committees/Council</li> <li>• To receive information on oversight of the Council's finances and discuss future rates setting.</li> <li>• To receive and consider complex or sensitive information prior to decision making through committee and Council.</li> <li>• To raise sensitive resource (particularly human resource) issues</li> <li>• To receive and discuss proposals relating to governance arrangements</li> </ul>
3.8	<p><u>Party Leaders' Forum</u></p> <p>Retain the name and agree the remit as suggested below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a forum for party groups to discuss emerging political/contentious issues</li> <li>• To facilitate discussions in respect of cultural, equality or good relations issues</li> <li>• To act as a forum for discussions with other city and/or government stakeholders or neighbouring councils</li> </ul>
3.9	<p>Both fora would continue to be non-decision making. The cycle of meetings for the Party Leaders' Consultative Panel would follow the current convention of being held in the week prior to a meeting of the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee. The meeting of the Party Leaders' Forum would be monthly or as required. The current secretariat arrangements would be retained. Parties would have the ability to request items to be placed on the agenda for Party Leaders' Forum. The meeting of the Party Leaders' Forum</p>

	<p>may take place in the absence of officers depending on the nature of the issue or issues under discussion. For those meetings at which an officer is present a minute of the proceedings will be recorded for those items which result in a recommendation going to a standing committee for a decision. This is in line with the position as agreed by the Council in <a href="#">December 2017</a>. In respect of the Party Leaders' Consultative Panel a minute will be circulated within two working days but subject to an understanding that confidential information may be redacted and that the minute will be managed to reflect the sensitivity of matters that were discussed.</p>
3.10	<p>It is noted that the Council, post local government elections, has currently no independents and that all parties will or may be represented at the fora. In respect of both fora Party Leaders may select a nominee from their membership to attend in their absence or if they have a particular interest in a matter under discussion. The Party Leaders' Consultative Panel will be chaired by the Chair of Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee or by the Chief Executive in his or her absence. The Party Leaders' Forum may elect its own Chair on a meeting by meeting basis or may be chaired, by consent, by the Chief Executive.</p>
3.11	<p>All participating parties must agree to the principle of confidentiality of discussions within these fora and of mutual trust and respect. This does not preclude the parties in respect of making public statements or adopting public positions in respect of matters after they appear on committee agendas but the parties must agree that discussions at these fora will remain confidential.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None additional</p>
3.13	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Budget and Transformation Panel Terms of Reference (Mar 09)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Notes from first meeting of Party Leaders' Forum (Dec 11)</p>