



Cost of Democracy – Chairman of the Council and Civic Office

Report by the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services

1.0 Summary

1.1 A summary and outline of proposals for the reduction in the cost of Democracy, specifically the Office of the Chairman of the Council to meet the expectations of the public vote in 'Your chance to be Chancellor' consultation but to retain the dignity and principles of the Office of Chairman of the Adur District Council.

2.0 Background

2.1 The role of the Chairman of the Council is defined in the Constitution as

'The Chairperson will be elected by the Council annually. The Chairperson and in his/her absence the Vice Chairperson, will have the following responsibilities:

- (i) To uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution, and to interpret the Constitution when necessary;
- (ii) To preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of councillors and the interests of the community;
- (iii) To ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which members who do not sit on executive committees or hold committee Chairpersonships are able to hold the members of the executive committees and committee Chairpersons to account;
- (iv) To promote public involvement in the Council's activities;
- (v) To promote community leadership and social responsibility;
- (vi) To be the ceremonial head of the Council acting as First Citizen and ambassador for the District of Adur;
- (vii) To represent the Council with dignity and without party political partisanship;
- (viii) To be the guardian of the Council's integrity'

- 2.2 The Constitution does not define the social element to the role which each Chairman of the Council makes their own and has developed over time, custom and practice.
- 2.3 In the current climate of public perception of junketing and the high profile of expenses this is the opportunity to define the role to make it fit for purpose and one that meets the expectations of the residents of the District.
- 2.4 Over time, Chairmen have found a need to achieve an outcome for their time in office along side the primary role which is to Chair the Council meetings. This has been translated into fundraising for local or national charities in which they have a special interest. While this is admirable it is a voluntary activity and not formally part of the role of the Chairman of the Council and the Council needs to be extremely careful about using public funds for this purpose. An expectation has developed over the years that members of the Democratic Services team supporting the Chairman, will become involved in supporting this area of the role of chairman to ensure that the Chairman has a successful year. This involves the arranging of charity events (meals etc); sending out invitations and collating responses; correspondence and other matters. Officer time directed in this support is not offset in the funds raised during the year and therefore the Council is using public money to contribute to the fund raising activities of the charity(ies). It is not easy to quantify the sum involved. This level of officer support is not appropriate as it is not a recognised role of the Council and it is no longer sustainable with need to save money and provide direct services to residents.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 As the role of Chairman of the Council is defined in the Local Government Act and also the Council's constitution the following are outline proposals for the reduction in levels of service and support to the office of the Chairman of the Council:

3.2

	Current level of service	Future level of service
1	Diary management	Moving in 2011/12 to be undertaken by the Chairman themselves with limited support from Officers – in future to be for forwarding correspondence and telephone enquiries, website management and monthly meetings to organising correspondence for any receptions/church service/HMS Shoreham matters. The Chairman to liaise with the Vice-chairman direct for support.
2	Civic Reception Church Service	A maximum of one Civic Reception and one Church Service per Civic Year, no other events or receptions to be funded from the Council's budgets. The exception being events for HMS Shoreham when on a formal home port visit, with a commensurate reduction in the expenditure for the Civic Reception/Church Service in that year. Expenditure in any one Civic Year on Hospitality to be within budget.

3	HMS Shoreham visits away from Home Port (for example Faslane, Scotland or visits to Portsmouth or London),	Expenditure will be personal and not paid from Council budgets.
4	Attending of events outside of the District as official engagements	No attendance at events outside of the Adur District/Worthing Borough Area. Exceptions these will be very rare and be for Sussex Wide events, for example the WSCC Chairman Annual event or the Sussex Armed Forces Day Drumhead Service or a specifically authorised event by the DSM in consultation with the Leader.
5	Attending any events where tickets have to be purchased whether this be within the district or linked events to charities etc.	Should the chairman wish to attend these events then this is personal expenditure and not from any council budgets (A number of other Councils in Sussex are also implementing this rule)
6	Attending of charity events within or outside of the District	All expenditure to and at these events to be personal and non council expenditure
7	Officer support or Council resources for any Chairman's charity work	All support for any chosen Charity will be from the Chairman's personal team except the banking of the receipts once collected by the Chairman's team, with Council officers for audit purposes. There will be no officer support in arranging events, correspondence or sundry matters. No use of Council money for purchasing tickets, transferring of guest expenditure at a charity events, prizes, raffle gifts refreshments etc. Resources for Charity work to be on an income and expenditure style of balance sheet for example cost of printing posters etc off set by income generated.
8	No resources from the Council for promoting events such as Holocaust Memorial Day or Sussex Day,	The Chairman may wish to consider these events in a personal capacity
9	Remembrance Sunday Services – remain as designated Civic Events organised by the Royal	The Council will not charge for advertising or administering Road Closures on behalf of the Royal British Legion for the Remembrance Sunday Events In the District

10	British Legion. Armed Forces Day to be supported Town Twinning	The current Council Policy is that Town Twinning is at no cost to the Council – subscription; overseas visits are not to be charged to the Council or the Chairman’s Allowance/expenses they are a personal expense by the Chairman as Honorary President. No council expenditure for visitors from the Council’s Twinned Towns for receptions or the like; a visiting Mayor is received as would other Civic Dignitaries visiting the District.
11	Chairman’s Christmas Card Competition	To continue and supported by officers
12	Miscellaneous Officers supporting the Chairman and Civic Office	The following will be paid from the Chairman’s Allowance: Cards/Gifts for 100 th Birthdays/diamond Weddings Civic Gifts – where these are necessary, these to be the District Crest paperweights or lapel badges. Christmas Cards; develop the use of e-cards from the competition design/encourage charity team to sell the winning designs for the Chairman’s Charity Past Chairman’s Medal Engraving the past chairman’s board Clothing Allowance for special purchases only – a policy to be agreed A full evaluation of the reduction in service; advice on Constitutional Matters and Chairing the Council meeting; setting up systems for management of the civic services, web site, events and reviewed in December 2011 for the 2012/13 year

3.3 General support to elected members

3.4 A greater use of electronic services for members with a view to ceasing paper copies of agenda papers and documents except where absolutely necessary.

- 3.5 Currently councillors are provided with limited refreshments prior to full meetings of Council. The Chairman can provide for this for Councillors from their personal allowance, this to be a personal decision resting with each individual Chairman.
- 3.6 Where Members attend in-house training or briefing sessions with officers, food refreshments are not to be provided unless the session is for a full day specialist training, for example Members Induction Day.
- 3.7 The Democratic Services satellite office to be open two days per week until the review in December 2011 with the medium term view that by May 2012 the team will be fully located in the Town Hall in Worthing.
- 3.8 For the avoidance of doubt 'Civic Events' are defined as follows:

A Civic Event is one so designated by the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services with the following criteria:

- the Chairman of the Council is likely to be the main Civic Head in attendance
- it is an event which the public are invited to attend
- it may or may not be organised by the Council,
- it is likely to be an event linked to national celebrations or commemorations

These definitions are an illustration, for example a public event may have to be ticketed due to the venue size or catering arrangements; the Royal British Legion organise Remembrance Services in Adur, not the Council.

4.0 Legal

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 1972, Sections 3 and 5 requires that the Council appoint a Chairman and a Vice-chairman to chair meetings of the Council. The same sections allow a 'Council may pay the Chairman for the purpose of enabling him to meet the expenses of his office such allowance as the council think reasonable'
- 4.2 There is no legal requirement to have an Office or officer resources to support the Chairman of Council nor a statutory obligation to carryout social events or engagements by the officeholder. There is no obligation to hold or host events, hold Church Services or to direct effort in to charity work.
- 4.3 The role of the Chairman of Adur District Council is outlined in the Council's constitution at 2-13 and is summarised in 2.0 above

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The Chairman's Allowance to be reduced from £5,000 to £2,500 for £2011/12 with a review in December 2011/12 for 2012/13.
- 5.2 The Vice-chairman's Allowance of £500 be reduced to £250 and reviewed in December 2012/13
- 5.3 The Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman and Vice Chairman – paid under the Council's Scheme of Members Allowances to remain at the approved rate and considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel during its Annual Review.

- 5.4 The Civic Hospitality Allowance to be reduced from £6,000 to £3,500 in 2011/12 with a view to reducing this to £2,000 in 2012/13
- 5.5 Officers were tasked with making a budget saving of 30% over three years, on current direct budgets this would require a saving of £3,450.
- 5.6 The service reductions and savings in allowances in paragraphs 3 and 5 above give a saving of £5,250 for 2011/12 which meets and exceeds the target set by the Executive.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That the Leader, who is the portfolio holder for Civic matters considers the proposed reduction in services and officer support to the Chairman of the Council and the Civic Office for 2011/12 as defined in the table and notes at paragraph 3.
- 6.2 The Leader notes the definition of a Civic Event as explained at paragraph 3.8 and that a review will be presented in December 2011 to evaluate the impact to the Council of the level of the reduction of service and support
- 6.3 That the budget savings identified in paragraph 5 be implemented with effect from the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2011.

Local Government Act 1972

Background Papers:

Adur District Council Constitution
Adur District Budget Book
Local Government Act 1972

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Schedule of Other Matters

1.0 Council Priority

- 1.1 To protect and improve priority services by reducing the cost of democracy and making funds available for other services.

2.0 Specific Action Plans

- 2.1 (A) To meet the targets set by the Executive to make savings in non-essential budgets and services
(B) -

3.0 Sustainability Issues

- 3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

4.0 Equality Issues

- 4.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

5.0 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- 5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

6.0 Human Rights Issues

- 6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

7.0 Reputation

- 7.1 The Council's reputation will be enhanced by listening to the public indication in the 'Your chance to be chancellor' to reduce the cost of democracy.
- 7.2 There will be no affect on the statutory role for the Chairman of the Council to chair meetings of the Council.

8.0 Consultations

- 8.1 (A) The proposals have been developed through discussions with the Leader of the Council and his Policy Advisor. The Leader is the portfolio holder for the Civic and Member Support Budgets
(B) -

9.0 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Matter considered and no issues identified that have not been covered under other headings.

10.0 Health & Safety Issues

- 10.1 There are no Health and Safety Issues in this report

11.0 Procurement Strategy

11.1 There are no procurement strategy issues in this report

12.0 Partnership Working

12.1 The Democratic Services Team is a joint service providing services to Adur and Worthing Councils.