

## PART A

**Report to:** Constitution Working Party  
**Date of meeting:** 14 June 2016  
**Report of:** Head of Democracy and Governance  
**Title:** Council Chairman

### 1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an opportunity for the Working Party to consider options for how the Chairman/Vice Chairman is selected
- 1.2 It also sets out additions for the role and function of the Chairman that could be included in the Constitution

### 2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 To make a recommendation to Council on the process for selecting future Chairmen/Vice Chairman
- 2.2 To recommend to Council the addition to the constitution of the Chairman's role and function as set out in 3.5

**Contact Officer:**

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### 3.0 **Detailed Proposal**

3.1 Attached at appendix 1 is research undertaken by the Democratic Services Manager on how other Councils in Hertfordshire elect their Chairman. In Watford we elect our vice chairman by the seniority method as outlined and it is custom and practice that whoever is vice chairman will (provided they are still a councillor) become chairman the following year.

This allows the vice chair a year to understand the role and prepare for their year as Chairman.

3.2 Over the last few years we have had a fairly large turn over of councillors and there are now very few councillors who have had a number of years service on the council who either actually want to take on the role or who have not already been chairman. The working party therefore might like to consider whether there is another way that the Council should be electing its future chairmen.

3.3 The Council's constitution currently sets out the following as the Role and Function of the Chairman:

- To uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution and to interpret the Constitution when necessary
- To preside over meeting of the council so that business can be carried out efficiently, and with regard to the rights of councillors and the interests of the community
- To promote public involvement in the council's activities
- To ensure the council meeting is a forum for debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which members who are not on the Executive are able to hold the Executive members to account.
- To be the conscience of the council
- To attend such civic and ceremonial functions as the council determines appropriate in accordance with protocol that the elected mayor will have first right of refusal of attending a civic event.

3.4 The Local Government Act 2000 does not allow the elected mayor or a member of the Executive to also be the Chairman.

3.5 It is suggested that the role and functions expressed in 3.3 above could be strengthened by also adding the following:

The Chairman and Vice Chairman when undertaking their civic and ceremonial roles should not:

- Bring the Council into disrepute through abuse of office
- Challenge the democratic mandate of the majority party when exercising the

casting vote at Council Meetings

- Attend any function or otherwise give support to any organisation or person, whose objectives are contrary to law and/or council policy
- Solicit engagements or visits at home or abroad or otherwise procure favours by virtue of office
- Overspend their budget
- Use their position for party political purposes, including seeking their own re-election.

3.6 It is intended that training will be provided to both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman in advance of their year of office to prepare them for their roles, including chairmanship skills, public speaking. Knowledge of the Council's procedure rules.

#### 4.0 **Implications**

##### 4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report

##### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report

##### 4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 There are no equalities implications in this report

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Selecting the Chairman of the Council

### **Background Papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

### **File Reference**

- None