

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In developing the constitution, the Council will be guided by the following principles

1. **Openness and Transparency**

Anyone who has dealings with the Council should be able to understand easily who is responsible for decisions and how best to make representations to the decision-maker. Subject to any legal requirements, decisions at Member level will always be taken in public.

2. **Accountability**

The new constitution will include arrangements enabling people to find out about decisions which have been taken and for those decisions to be scrutinised by Members who did not take part in the decision. There will also be the opportunity to ask questions and a facility to complain about failure in services or Member conduct.

3. **Efficiency**

The arrangements for decision-making will ensure the capability for decisions to be made quickly in response to changing circumstances and the developing needs and aspirations of local communities. The arrangements will seek to keep the number of decision-making bodies and meetings to the minimum necessary consistent with the need to make decisions quickly.

4. **Soundness**

The constitution will comply with all legal requirements, including the Local Government Act 1972, the Human Rights Act 2000, the Localism Act 2011 and all other relevant laws and statutory guidance as well as reflecting good practice.

5. **Affordability**

A decision-making system based on committees requires more resources to service the meetings than is the case in an executive system. However, by using every available opportunity to streamline decision-making, use available technology optimising the officer arrangements, it is intended to contain the cost of running the new system within existing resources.

6. **The third way**

Although technically a “committee system” under the Local Government Act 1972, the new constitution will, in practice, retain the best parts of the executive system that are consistent with the legal framework (such as the forward plan, scrutiny etc.) This coupled with other initiatives referred to under 7 below, will make it look and feel different from the traditional committee or executive system. It will not be a simple “going back.” It will be moving forward.

7. Forward Looking

Opportunities will be identified and offered to use all available technology and modern ways of working to make the decision-making process and the democratic engagement one of the best e-enabled and customer-friendly ones in the country. Over a period of time, we will consider extending web-casting, electronic agendas, “virtual meetings,” electronic voting, public question and answer sessions on issues of city-wide importance. These will be subject to consultation with Members, resource implications and feasibility studies. This is intended to help Members and the public to access documents easily and avoid over-dependence on bulky paperwork as well as reducing costs.