



Council

11th April 2016

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Subject: Reconfiguration of the Council Chamber

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

The Democracy Working Group (DWG) have undertaken an exercise to gain feedback on different seating options for Council. These options have been scrutinised by Challenge and Improvement Committee (C&I) and recommendations made for Council consideration and adoption.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Council consider the recommendation of Challenge and Improvement Committee for adoption of a configuration for Council to implement from its Annual Meeting onwards.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None

Financial : [FIN/130/16](#)

A £2000 pressure had been identified for undertaking modifications to the chamber to accommodate a horse shoe layout.

Staffing :None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : None

Risk Assessment :None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

220216 – C&I Committee Report on Update from Democracy Working Group
Minutes of the meeting of C&I Committee on 22nd February
050416 – C&I Committee Report on Reconfiguration of the Council Chamber

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following much debate at the Member Forum (which comprises a cross section of all political groups) the Democracy Working Group (DWG) took on the task of reconfiguring the Council Chamber to deliver a better opportunity for debate at full meetings of Council and to aid the Democratic process.
- 1.2 During the last civic year, this process had been discussed and a scoping exercise completed, which formed a solid basis to begin development of layouts that would fulfil the criteria set, but also work within the limitations of the room.
- 1.3 These limitations included:
 - Remaining in the front section of the chamber only, due to camera positions (Immovable);
 - the positioning of the presentation screens (Immovable)
 - the positioning of the TV monitors (immovable)
 - the positioning of the floor boxes (£200 to move each)
 - using the existing furniture (£400 per unit)
 - ensuring the space could remain flexible for all other current uses
 - seating for 34 Members on the floor, 2 on the dais
 - seating for 6 officers, with room for 2 additional people at Annual Council
 - Mindful of the IT equipment installed
 - Mindful of the plumbed in drinks fountain
- 1.4 Four options were drawn up and circulated to members of the DWG, facilities and democratic staff, and all were invited to attend a morning dedicated to putting each design in to practice.
- 1.5 These options were discussed and scrutinised prior to recommending trialling 2 options for the meetings of Council on 15th November 15 and 25th January 16. These are set out at Appendix A and B to this report.
- 1.6 Seating arrangements were proposed to group leaders prior to each meeting, on the basis that the temporary plans would not reflect a confirmed seating chart on adoption – this would be negotiated between the groups and take into account individual requirements.
- 1.7 For the purpose of this report, retaining the original layout is referred to as Option 3. Feedback was sought on this layout at the meeting of Council on 3rd March 16 and attached as Appendix C.
- 1.8 Feedback for all the layout trials was analysed by the DWG and recommendations made to Challenge and Improvement Committee for scrutiny prior to a recommendation being made by that Committee to Council for adoption.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 A summary of comments received is set out below:

15th November (Option 1)

- Cost concerns at a time when funds should be conserved;
- Open Layout offers good view of Members' faces to each other;
- Situation of the Leader of the Opposition and Administration Members;
- Reduced view of the monitor screens;
- Temperature of the room;
- Better view for the public;
- Individual requirements for seating;
- A blind spot for the Vice Chairman to note Members who wished to speak;
- Power provision.

25th January (Option 2)

- The previous layout was preferred;
- Issues around the location of the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Members;
- Welcomed the room temperature;
- View of dais was a difficult angle for some positions;
- Cost concerns at a time when funds should be conserved;
- Individual requirements for seating;
- Free movement and space concerns

3rd March (Option 3)

- Preference for Option 1
- Option 3 creates a feeling of isolation due to restricted view of other members
- A wish to see Members when they are speaking;
- Preference for a horseshoe shape;
- Option 3 allows movement for members during meetings without disturbing others;
- Options 1 and 2 support debate;
- Individual Member requirements;
- Investigation required to find a solution where Members can see as many Members as possible (in the round);
- Option 3 seemed less cramped; and
- Inclusivity driven layout required.

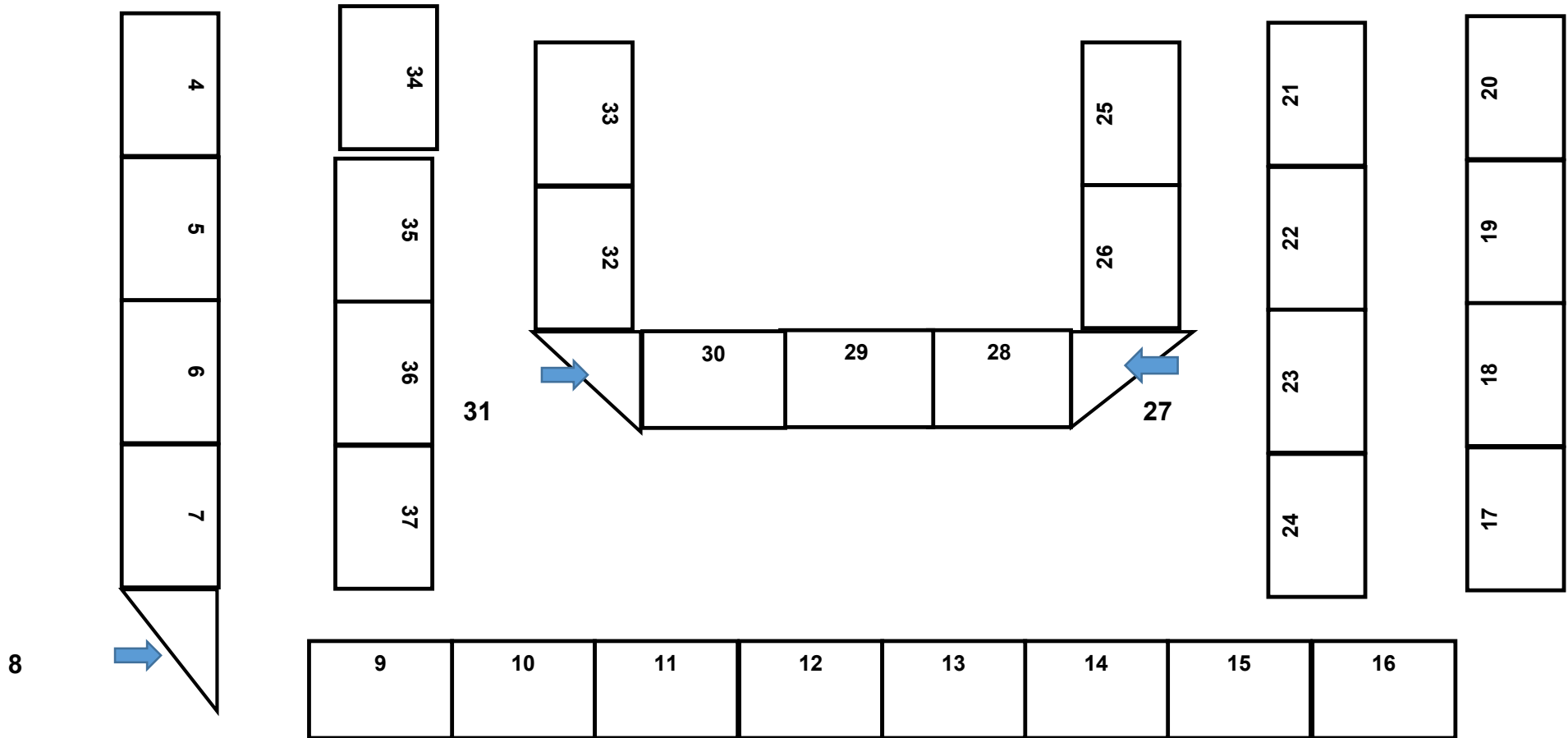
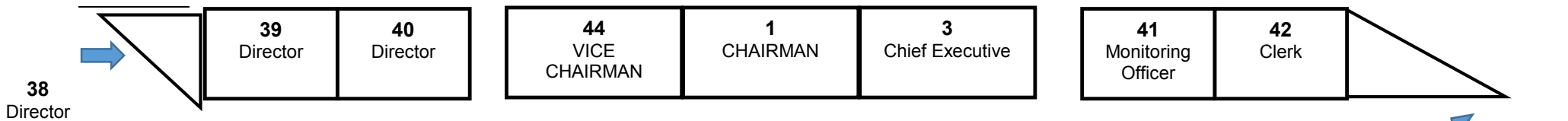
2.2 The scoring received showed a strong indication that Members preferred Option 1 (15th November) to both Option 2 (25th January) and the original layout (5th March).

AVERAGE SCORES			
	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Appropriate for purpose	7.3	5.0	6.2
Aids Debate / Democracy	7.0	5.3	5.4
Comfortable / Accessible	6.9	6.2	6.1
Ease of viewing presentations	7.5	4.4	6.7
Percentage of Cllrs preferring Option	63%	52%	32%

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DWG AND C&I

- 3.1 The DWG, at their meeting on 16th March considered each comment made, and the scores received and favoured recommendation of Option 1 for adoption. This recommendation was considered at the meeting of C&I Committee on 5th April, and an update will be given verbally on the views of the Committee.
- 3.2 It is proposed that seating arrangements for any agreed option be discussed and ratified by group leaders, and the appendices reflect a configuration only.
- 3.3 Council should be mindful that Options 1 and 2 have a cost implication of £1200 - £1900 to move floor boxes and relocate the drinks machine. Therefore a £2000 pressure has been identified to undertake this unbudgeted work.
- 3.4 Council are asked to reflect on the findings of the DWG and the recommendations of C&I Committee and agree the adoption of a layout from Annual Council on 9th May.

APPENDIX A – Option 1



APPENDIX B – Option 2

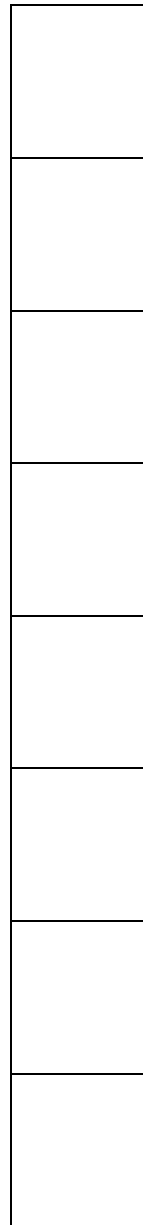
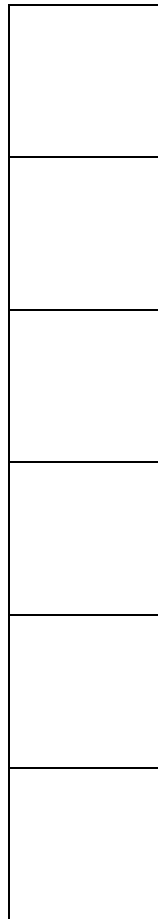
CREST

DOOR

Vice Chairman	Chairman	CEX
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Officer	Director	Director	Director	Clerk	MO
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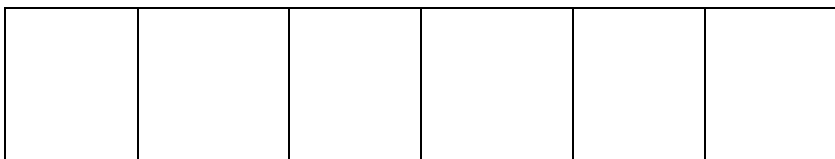
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DOOR

■ Conservative
 ■ Lib Dems

■ Labour
 ■ Independent

Council Chamber Layout

Officers 45	Chaplain 44
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2	1	3
Vice-Chairman Roger Patterson	Chairman Angela Lawrence	Chief Executive

Officer	Officer 42	Officer	Officer 40
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15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Hugo Marfleet	John McNeill	Paul H-Cowan	Steve England	Pat Mewis	Sheila Bibb	Di Rodgers	Chris Darcel	David Bond	Michael Devine	Richard Oaks	

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Thomas Smith	Jackie Brockway	Malcolm Parish	Adam Duguid	Stuart Kinch	Jessie Milne	Ian Fleetwood	Alex Bridgwood	Matthew Boles	Judy Rainsforth	Trevor Young	

39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28
Lewis Strange	Gillian Bardsley	Owen Bierley	Tom Regis	Stuart Curtis	Anne Welburn	Jeff Summers	Giles McNeill	Lesley Rollings	Reg Shore	David Cotton	Angela White