

Agenda item 5a) refers

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE EXECUTIVE

This is my first report under the new arrangements, which have been introduced following a leaders' meeting on the 13th September. As such it breaks new territory and is my personal view of recent events, which I hope is constructive especially to those who perhaps are not aware of the functioning of the Executive.

We now have new structures in place following the full council meeting of 25th July with a 9 member Executive and four Advisory Panels, Community Development & Policy, Community Services, Development Services and Resources and Review. I have attended most of these advisory panel meetings and I think it fair to say that they have yet to become as effective as was envisaged when they were formed.

The production of the Monthly Performance Report has, I think, been a key document and has allowed increasingly informed discussion of the B.V.P.I's Key Priorities Targets and budgets which must be a key driver of ensuring that what needs to be done is being done. We must thank Paul Clark and all those who produce this increasingly important document.

Some of the discussions of the panels I feel lacked focus but, as these are early days, time will tell how effective these new Panels are.

Recent meetings with De Montfort University which I have attended on Council's behalf are, I am sure, going to be extremely helpful in moving forward the concepts of Advisory and Scrutiny Panels as they have a wealth of information as to how other Councils are tackling these problems. The possibility of facilitators provided by De Montfort (which was approved at the last meeting on 5th October) is an exciting prospect and one which I am sure will be beneficial to the Council as a whole.

The allocation of portfolios has created some problems and this has been the subject of two Scrutiny Panel Policy deliberations.

It is to be hoped that in future the Executive can agree who are to be the portfolio holders in an amicable way, but now that we have a politically balanced Executive this may not always be possible. Scrutiny certainly agreed that skills should count but their recommendation that if the Executive could not agree Council should be the appropriate body to decide will no doubt, I feel, focus minds on the problem. However, at the moment we stay as we are.

The Executive as a body has, I think, worked well despite the increase in size. It has its disagreements which is inevitable and stimulating but only one item so far has resulted in the call in procedure being used and on reflection this perhaps could have been avoided if sufficient debate had taken place at the time. In any event the matter was resolved and proved that the system worked.

The new concept of a Forward Plan has been addressed and I have regular meetings with the Director 'Policy' to enable this to be processed. I hope that where members feel that Key Decisions need to be added that they will bring them forward, as it is vitally important that we do not overlook any major items. You will be aware that 3 Key Decisions have been added to the Forward Plan for October in the letter of 4th October.

It would be counter productive to report all the items that the Executive has dealt with since the last full Council. Personally I am concerned that so few elected members, other than the Executive, attend our meetings. Perhaps that means that all members are satisfied as to the Executive's competence or, perhaps as has been noted recently, the number of meetings now being held dissuades members from attending.

May I say (and I hope I reflect other Executive member's concerns) that the constant stream of Government initiatives which demand deadlines for comment and input does lead one to question how local government is perceived by central government. It certainly highlights that without an executive structure we would not be able to respond to these deadlines in any meaningful way.

I continue to attend meetings of the Welland Partnership, the next scheduled for 30th October. The importance of the grouping cannot be over-emphasised. The concept of shared services is now central to the thinking of the Welland, despite some misgivings expressed at our last meeting.

I hope this first report is helpful and generates comment and debate. May I thank my fellow Executive members for the help they give to me and also the Officers who are, as always, unfailingly supportive.