REPORT TO:	**Cabinet**
	Council
DATE:	**17 February 2011**
	3 March 2011
SUBJECT:	**Modernising Democratic Services**
WARDS AFFECTED:	**All**
REPORT OF:	**Assistant Chief Executive**
CONTACT OFFICER:	**Andrea Grant, Assistant Director (Democratic Services) x 2030**
EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL:	**NO**

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

To provide details of proposed changes to the democratic processes in order to meet the savings agreed by the Council on 16th December 2010.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

To enable changes to be made to the Calendar of Meetings and Constitution (Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members) and introduce electronic decision making for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That

Cabinet

1. The system of electronic decision-making (for decisions delegated to Cabinet Members) be implemented from the 2011/12 Municipal Year;

2. The Council be recommended to give approval to the Scheme of Delegation for Cabinet Members being revised in the Council Constitution to allow all non-key decisions to be delegated to the Cabinet Members;

3. The Programme of Cabinet Meetings for 2011/12 set out in Appendix B of the report be approved;

4. The Council be recommended to give approval to the Programme of Meetings for the Council and Regulatory Committees; Overview and Scrutiny Committees; Area Committees; and Members' Briefings for the 2011/12 Municipal Year, as set out in Appendices C and D of the report;

5. The Cabinet Member meetings set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report be cancelled and the Council be recommended to approve the cancellation of the remainder of the meetings set out in that same paragraph.

Council

1. The report be noted;

2. Approval be given to the Scheme of Delegation for Cabinet Members being revised in the Council Constitution to allow all non key decisions to be delegated to Cabinet Members.

3. Approval be given to the Programme of Meetings for the Council and Regulatory Committees; Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and Members' Briefings for the 2011/12 Municipal Year, as set out in Appendices C and D of the report.

4. Approval be given to the cancellation of the meetings set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report.

KEY DECISION:	No
FORWARD PLAN:	No
IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	From the beginning of the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

| ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: |
| None |

IMPLICATIONS:

| **Budget/Policy Framework:** | The proposals will contribute towards the £120,000 saving agreed by the Council at its meeting on 17th December 2010. |
| **Financial:** | |

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	2010/ 2011 £	2011/ 2012 £	2012/ 2013 £	2013/ 2014 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
REVENUE IMPLICATIONS				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure		-£120,000		
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal:	None arising from this report.
Risk Assessment:	The implementation of the new electronic decision making process is dependant on the IT solution which has been designed, which would mean that regardless of whether a Councillor is using Council-owned or personal equipment, decision making can still be undertaken remotely
Asset Management:	None arising from this report.

| CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS |
| Interim Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Strategy (FD664 /2011), Acting Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD00056/11) and Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods) |

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

Corporate Objective		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Creating Safe Communities		√	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Environmental Sustainability		√	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		√	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8	Children and Young People		√	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At its meeting on 16th December 2010, the Council agreed savings option CE1 (Modernising Democratic Services & Scrutiny Support). The budget saving agreed was £120,000. In order to achieve this saving, it was noted by the Council that the impact would include the introduction of electronic decision making (eliminating the need for Cabinet Member meetings), a reviewed Constitution to amend the scheme of delegation to Cabinet Members (all non-key decisions delegated to appropriate Cabinet Member), a significantly reduced Committee timetable across all meetings, a revised committee template to produce shorter reports, a reviewed frequency of the delivery of agenda packs, and all large appendices on-line only. It was also noted that system and process changes would be required to achieve this saving. This report sets out the areas where Member approval is required in order to achieve the agreed budget reduction.

2.0 ELECTRONIC DECISION MAKING

2.1 At present, formal meetings are held for Cabinet Members to exercise their delegated decision-making powers. In other Merseyside authorities, matters for decision are commented upon, approved and published online. The existing Modern Gov system is already configured to allow this to be implemented.

2.2 If formal Cabinet Member meetings were ceased, this would reduce the number of meetings serviced by Committee & Member Services by 137 (based on the 2010/11 calendar). A reduction in meetings of 58%. Associated meeting costs would also be reduced including eliminating the need to provide video-conferencing facilities, paper, printing, copying and increased income potential for room bookings.

2.3 The implementation of the new email solution for Councillors means that e-mailed links for decision making would not currently allow access directly into Modern Gov. However, an IT solution has been designed which would mean that regardless of whether a Councillor is using Council-owned or personal equipment, decision making can still be undertaken remotely. There will be some infrastructure costs for this system change and although a final cost is awaited, it is unlikely to exceed a one-off cost of £4,000. This sum will be built into the cost of a transformed service, in the first year of operation.

3.0 REVIEW SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO CABINET MEMBERS

3.1 The Constitution can be amended to reflect that all non-key decisions are delegated to the relevant portfolio holder and, if electronic decision-making is also used, the amount of paperwork produced, copied and distributed is substantially reduced.

3.2 This system also raises the profile of the Forward Plan and assists with corporate planning as the only items that will be considered by the Cabinet are those contained in the Forward Plan as key decisions (apart from genuinely urgent items). This allows for better agenda management as those up-coming decisions are published up to 4 months in advance. This can also

be tied into the corporate consultation calendar so that key, strategic decisions are open for consultation in a timely and managed manner.

3.3 A key decision, as defined in the Council's Constitution, is:-

- any Executive decision that is not in the Annual Revenue Budget and Capital Programme approved by the Council and which requires a gross budget expenditure, saving or virement of more than £100,000 or more than 2% of a Departmental budget, whichever is the greater;

- any Executive decision where the outcome will have a significant impact on a significant number of people living or working in two or more Wards

3.4 There are other savings that can also be achieved through this proposal, although they are harder to quantify, in terms of the costs of storage of agenda papers across the Council and the disposal of paperwork through confidential waste/recycling.

3.5 In practice, decisions made electronically are not dependent on a meeting timetable and can therefore be made as and when required. This would, whilst speeding up decision-making, still provide open and transparent decisions. When a decision is required, a report will be produced by Officers as is the current process. The proposal will be published and an email alert sent to the relevant Cabinet Member and opposition spokespersons as and when an agenda is published. This will contain a link to the proposal and the report. Spokespersons will be able to comment on the proposal and the Cabinet Member can approve, not approve or ask for further information. As with agendas published, any member can register to be notified when proposals are published.

3.6 Once decisions are made a formal record of the decision is published and is open to call-in for 5 working days.

4.0 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

4.1 The main driver for the business of Democratic Services is the number of meetings that are serviced. Over a 12 month period (June 2009 to June 2010), 235 meetings were serviced. In order to achieve the budget saving requirement, the number of meetings must be reduced. This would lead to savings in terms of paper, copying, staff time distributing agendas, room booking income, refreshments, staff travelling time, etc.

4.2 An extensive review of the Council's Calendar of meetings has been undertaken with a view to reducing the number of meetings held/serviced. **Appendix A sets out the key principles used to draw up the draft calendar**. The revised calendar also avoids Cabinet and Council meetings being held on the same day. By moving to 5 cycles of meetings per municipal year (with the exception of Cabinet and Planning Committee) and removing formal Cabinet Member meetings (see Section 2.0), this equates to a 47% reduction in meetings. However, the administration of the electronic decision making process referred to in Section 3 above will need to be undertaken by the Committee and Member Services Section.

4.3   If Cabinet Member meetings continued to be held, albeit on a reduced timetable of 6 per year, this would mean only a 22% reduction in meetings. It would not be possible to achieve the full £120,000 saving. This is not therefore an option.

4.4   Appendix B sets out the proposed Programme of Cabinet Meetings for 2011/12 and Appendices C and D set out the proposed Programme of Meetings for the Council and Regulatory Committees; Area Committees and Members' Briefings for 2011/12.

4.5   Changes in the level of activity for Democratic Services (Committee and Member Services Section and the Scrutiny Support Section) will inevitably have implications for the staffing structure and a restructure will be required to achieve the required savings. It is anticipated that a maximum reduction of 3 posts will be required, however there are discussions ongoing around support for the emerging area partnerships and although no firm proposals are available at this time, this will need to be resolved quickly in order to achieve the full saving required in 2011/12. In any event, an amalgamation of teams is the most effective means of achieving a reduction, whilst maintaining sufficient flexibility and capacity.

4.6   The reduced calendar of meetings will also allow some flexibility for staff within Democratic Services to provide support for the Elections team during peak times.

4.7   In view of the current financial climate and the additional work envisaged as a result of a combined referendum, local and parish elections, it is proposed that additional resilience be provided to the elections team by Democratic Services staff. It is therefore proposed that the following meetings scheduled to be held after the Council meeting on 24 March 2011 (the Notice of Election will be displayed on 25 March) be cancelled to release staff to provide this support, resilience and additional capacity:

Meeting	Date (s)
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	28 March 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Perf. and Corporate Services)	29 March 2011
Cabinet Member - Corporate Services	30 March 2011
Southport Area Committee	30 March 2011
Planning (Visiting Panel)	4 April 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Health and Social Care)	5 April 2011
Members' ICT Steering Group	5 April 2011
Cabinet Member - Technical Services	6 April 2011 20 April 2011 4 May 2011
Cabinet Member – Environmental	6 April 2011 4 May 2011
Cabinet Member - Children's Services	12 April 2011 3 May 2011
Cabinet Member – Regeneration	13 April 2011 4 May 2011
Cabinet Member - Performance and Governance	13 April 2011 4 May 2011
Cabinet Member - Health and Social Care	13 April 2011
Cabinet Member - Leisure and Tourism	20 April 2011
Cabinet Member – Communities	20 April 2011
Cabinet Member - Corporate Services Briefing Meeting for Cabinet Member - Corporate Services	27 April 2011 13 April 2011

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regen and Environ Services)	12 April 2011
Pay and Grading Committee	14 April 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services)	19 April 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Corporate Ser)	26 April 2011
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board	3 May 2011

4.8   The meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 March 2011;
       Planning Committee on 6 April and 4 May 2011; Cabinet on 14 April 2011 and
       the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 18 April 2011 will continue to be
       held. A meeting of the Cabinet Member – Children's Services will also be
       held on 19 April 2011 to consider the proposals for the closure of St. Wilfrid's
       RC High School following the consultation period. If any other urgent
       decisions are required during the above period, ad-hoc meetings of the
       relevant Cabinet Member may be convened.

The key changes to the calendar of meetings are as follows:

- Annual Council Meeting (Election of Mayor) to be held at 6.00 p.m. on Thursday, 12 May 2011, in the week following the Council Elections. Venue to be based on the preferred location for the Mayor Elect (Councillor Cummins) which is Bootle Town Hall.
- Adjourned Council Meeting (Appointment of Cabinet and Committees) to be held on **Tuesday**, 17 May 2011, in the week after the Annual Council Meeting. This will give the Political Groups more time to determine the Membership of Committees etc. following the Council Elections on 5 May 2011.
- Six Ordinary Council Meetings to be held every 8 weeks on a Thursday commencing at 6.30 p.m. plus the Budget Council Meeting to be held on 1st March 2012.
- Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee Meetings to be based on an eight week Meeting Cycle.
- Council will not meet on the same day as Cabinet. Cabinet will meet in weeks 2 and 6 of the eight week cycle with the Council Meeting in week 8.
- Cabinet Meetings to be held every 4 weeks (one per month except for April 2012) on a Thursday at 10.00 a.m. - The first meeting to be held on 26 May 2011, in the week following the Adjourned Annual Council meeting.
- A meeting of the Cabinet Urgent Business Committee could be convened in April 2012 if necessary, to deal with any urgent executive business.
- Planning Committee to meet every four weeks including April 2012 on a Wednesday, commencing at 6.30 p.m.
- Planning Petition(s) Committee to be **discontinued** as petitions can be submitted to any meeting of the Planning Committee.
- No meetings will be held:
  - in the period from the Council Elections on 5 May 2011 until the Adjourned Annual Council Meeting except for the Annual Council Meeting (Election of Mayor) pending the appointment of the Cabinet and Committees for 2011/12.
  - in April 2012, except for the Planning Committee and Council Meeting
  - in the period between Christmas and New Year (Dec 2011/Jan 2012)
- The venues for all meetings alternate between Bootle and Southport Town Halls except for the Audit and Governance Committee which meets at Bootle Town Hall
- Each of the 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committees to meet bi monthly, 5 times during the year commencing at 6.30 p.m. - the main Overview and Scrutiny work will be done by the Working Groups to be established on an ad hoc basis.
- Licensing and Regulatory Committee to meet every 8 weeks on a Monday commencing at 6.30 p.m.
- Meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee to be convened as and when required
- Audit and Governance Committee to meet every quarter (4 meetings per year) on a Wednesday commencing at 3.00 p.m. in Bootle Town Hall in order to meet statutory requirements etc.
- Standards Committee to meet 5 times during the year as now on a Thursday commencing at 10.00 a.m.
- Each Area Committee to meet bi-monthly, 5 times during the year.

- The meetings of each Area Committee commence at 6.30 p.m. except for the Formby Area Committee which commences at 7.00 p.m.
- The Member Development Steering Group and the Members ICT Steering Group will be **discontinued** and the business previously undertaken by the two Steering Groups will be undertaken by the Cabinet Member – Corporate Services.
- The dates of the Leaders Group Meetings, which are not public meetings have been included for completeness, as it aids corporate planning of decisions.