



Report Writing and Report Template

The purpose of the report template is to introduce a format that will ensure consistency of report writing throughout West Lothian Council. The format of the template is compatible with the use of iPads and other electronic devices. To ensure that elected members and other report recipients can easily identify and understand the information and implications presented, it is essential that a corporate style to the structure and content of reports be followed. Use of this template will ensure that reports are comprehensive and cover all salient points whilst also being easy to understand. The Code of Corporate Governance also imposes standards in relation to the form and content of committee reports.

This template must be used for all reports to West Lothian Council, its committees and any sub-committees, and also Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels, and any other meetings at which elected members of the council will consider the report. The most recent version of the template must be used. There is a link to the document under the Related Documents section on the Councillor/Committee Information tab on the intranet page. Reports using a superseded template will be rejected, and returned for revision, and so may not be included on the agenda.

The template may also be used for any other report including reports for the Corporate Management Team or internal to service areas.

Clear and well-written reports are an essential part of the council's decision-making machinery, and the contents of a report should be accurate, relevant and comprehensive so that the adequacy of the decisions made can be demonstrated, if challenged later.

A list of the potential stages in the process of preparing a report and having it approved at committee is included. Not all stages will apply to every report, and the more important the subject matter of the report, the greater will be the number of steps which must be followed.

There is also a very brief guide to preparing for the actual meeting, and presenting a report there.

Please follow the links to the template, guidance and instructions for completion:-

- A. Report Template (the starting point for your report)
- B. How to Write a Report (guidance on style, and what to include and avoid)
- C. How to Create A Report from the Template (the practical advice for using the template)
- D. The Timeline – Stages in the Process (all the potential hurdles to clear before approval)
- E. Attendance and Presentation at Committee

If you require any assistance, please contact the Committee Services Team on (01506 2)81601 or (01506 2)81609.

B. HOW TO WRITE A REPORT IN THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE STYLE

1. Public or Private?

Legislation requires reports and meetings to be publicly accessible unless a statutory exemption applies. At the outset, consider whether you think the report should be taken in private, and why, and then consider whether the legislation will allow that to happen. The types of information which may justify the public being excluded can be seen in Standing Orders which can be found here -

<http://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=14558&p=0>

Those reports which the law permits to be taken in private are issued on yellow paper. The decision to do that is for the Clerk to make, and in practice that is through Committee Services. Even where that happens, in almost all cases the body dealing with the report will have to make a decision to exclude the public from the meeting for that item of business.

2. Heading and Title

Reports should usually be in the name of the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive, or Head of Service (or other officer mentioned in the Scheme of Delegations) by reference to the post, not the individual. In a small number of cases, and by special authority of a Depute Chief Executive, reports may be in the name of the post of an appropriate Senior Manager (e.g., reports to Audit Committee by the Internal Audit Manager).

3. Appropriate Council Body

Make sure that you identify and name the appropriate council body (committee or PDSP) for your report. The remit of all the council's internal bodies are set out in the Scheme of Administration, which is part of Standing Orders, and accessed through the intranet – <http://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/6941/Councils-Standing-Orders-and-Corporate-Governance>

4. Purpose of Report (Part A)

Explain briefly why the subject matter of the report needs to come to the meeting. The purpose should be brief and concise whilst clearly indicating the reason behind the report. Officers should be aware of the distinctions amongst "Purpose of the Report", "Recommendations" and "Conclusion". The same wording should not simply be repeated in these different places in the report.

5. Recommendation (Part B)

Set out clearly all decisions the meeting is being asked to take. Each individual recommendation should be separately numbered for clarity and ease of understanding.

A recommendation should not be "to approve the terms of the report" or "to note the terms of the report" as this does not summarise the recommendations contained in the terms of the report. The wording of the recommendations will in most cases be repeated in the wording of the decision recorded in the minute, and officers should think ahead to the desired outcome and word the recommendations accordingly.

The powers of each body are set out in the Scheme of Administration, and the recommendation should be framed in a way appropriate to those powers. For example, a PDSP cannot make decisions for the council, whilst the Council Executive can. The Scheme of Administration can be accessed through the under the Councillor/Committee Info tab.

The use of standardised wording for recommendations assists in providing clarity, familiarity and consistency:-

If a policy requires to be adopted by committee, say “To approve the policy set out in Appendix 1...”.

Avoid words and phrases such as “adopt” and “mandate the use of” and “endorse” in committee reports.

If a decision requires to be made then set out clearly and exactly the decision which is desired at the end of the process.

If powers to make a decision or take a particular course of action are to be delegated to officers on a temporary or one-off basis (as opposed to a standing delegation) then say “To authorise (designated officer by reference to the post) to ...”, and if that power is to be used subject to conditions or after consultation (for instance, with the chair) then that should be spelled out.

Avoid the use of “to mandate officers to ...” or “grant a mandate to officers to...”

If more general powers are to be conferred on officers which would mean that the Scheme of Delegations is to be amended then say as a separate recommendation “and to amend the Scheme of Delegations accordingly”.

If a report is for information only and does not require a formal decision then say “To note that ...” and set out what is to be noted.

Avoid the use of words like “endorse” as alternatives to “note”.

Avoid the use of “To note the terms of the report” – more detail is needed as to what is being “noted” by members.

6. Summary of Implications (Part C)

This part of the report is for a summary of the implications, a few words only in each box, to make the meaning clear. More information or a longer discursive explanation should be included in Part D if required.

I Council Values

These are listed below for reference:-

- focusing on our customers' needs;
- being honest, open and accountable
- providing equality of opportunities;
- developing employees;
- making best use of our resources; and

- working in partnership.

They are all included in the template, and the ones judged not to be relevant to the subject of the report must be deleted. Very few reports will relate to all six values. There is no requirement to provide details of how the value relates to the content of the report.

II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)

This section is intended to alert members and other readers of the report to the main implications relating to corporate governance, including compliance with statute and regulations and council policy. Only summarised information is required here with detailed information being provided in Section D of the report, where appropriate.

(a) Policy

All council policies and procedures relevant to the subject matter of the report should be referred to by name, with a brief explanation of how they will be affected if the report's recommendations are agreed. Authors should consider and clearly specify how the decisions arising from the report will impact on the policy of the council. A statement should be included that confirms the purpose of the report as being to:

- Create a new policy;
- amend existing policy;
- Approve a course of action; or
- Provide information about an existing policy and its operation.

If there are no relevant policies or procedures, then "None" should be entered here. Entering "None" should be as the result of a conscious decision that after consideration, the officer has concluded that there are no such implications.

Authors of reports should be aware of the council policies relevant to their reports however the minute retrieval system and search facility could assist in identifying appropriate council policy. Significant policies applicable to the council as a whole can also be found on the council intranet, for example, HR policies within **mytoolkit**

(b) Legal

Reference should be made to the relevant legislation, contractual arrangements or other legal authority that empowers the council to take the action recommended in the report. This should include any relevant legal constraints that apply. If "None" is entered, elected members and other readers of the report will assume that the author is satisfied there are no legal implications. Again, entering "None" should be the result of a conscious examination of the report to see if there are such implications. Legal advice is obtainable from the council's Legal Services on (01506 2)83524 for property and conveyancing (Wendy Richardson), and (01506 2)83530 for litigation (Nicola Hogg) or general advice on (01506 2)81605 (Carol Johnston).

c) Strategic Environmental Assessment

If the report deals with any draft or finalised plan, strategy or proposal, confirmation should be given of whether an appraisal has been made regarding the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The outcome of such an assessment should be included in the report for reference. Advice on compliance with the SEA legislation is obtainable in the first instance from the SEA lead officer in each service area, or corporately from the Strategic Planning team.

(d) Equality Issues

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) must be conducted as a requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, and the Equality Act 2006 (Gender Equality Duty). This legislation is specific to the public sector in the UK and places a number of requirements upon the council in terms of review and amendment to its policies and functions.

There are two stages to EIA process:

- Relevance Assessment; and
- Full Assessment

The equality relevance process must be completed for every policy submitted to PDSP. Full assessment is discretionary based on the results of relevance.

The overall objective of the relevance process is to help you decide whether your policy has the potential to discriminate against any particular group in our community. The overall objective of full assessment is to identify barriers, and solutions to these, for those accessing your policy/ service. The process also enables opportunity for objective justification of current or proposed approach to policy/ service delivery.

The toolkit to support officers in conducting an EIA can be found via on the intranet.

For queries or further information please contact: Maggie Archibald on (01506 2) 81343.

(e) Health and Safety

Any health and safety implications should be stated, whether they apply to the whole community, employees, or specific groups of either category. Advice is obtainable from the council's Occupational Health and Safety Manager.

(f) Risk Assessment

The risk assessment heading is designed to enable the identification of any changes to the service or corporate risk register entries, including the identification of additional risks. Advice is obtainable from the council's Risk and Insurance Manager.

III Implications for Scheme of Delegation to Officers

Because of either legal requirements or council policy, some decisions must be made by full council or a committee whilst some can be made by officers. The council is required by law to maintain a public document containing the decision-making powers which have been delegated to officers for a period of more than 6 months. The council also has a Scheme of Administration which sets out the powers and remits of its committees and PDSPs.

The Scheme of Delegations can be accessed under the Councillor/Committee Info tab.

The Scheme of Administration can be accessed under the Councillor/Committee Info tab.

Officers should check the Scheme of Delegations to see what powers have already been delegated to officers in relation to the subject matter of the report. If there are existing powers then they should consider whether any changes are needed to them. If there are no existing powers then they should consider whether new powers are needed.

Officers should consider whether it is appropriate or desirable for all decisions to be delegated to a committee, or whether all decisions should be taken at committee, or whether some decisions should be taken by officers and some reserved for committee. That may mean some additional powers require to be conferred on a committee and officers should check the Scheme of Administration to see if that will be needed.

Officers should take advice from Legal Services or Committee Services if necessary.

If changes are needed to either Scheme, then this section should be used to say very briefly what is needed. The changes should be set out in the body of the report and an additional recommendation made in Part B as follows:-

“To amend the Scheme of Delegations (and/or) Scheme of Administration accordingly”.

If no such changes are required then this section should be completed to say “None”.

IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators

The council operates a comprehensive system of performance monitoring and reporting through the Covalent system. Proposals in committee reports may be anticipated to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the service’s performance indicators. The potential impact on performance is one of the factors essential for proper consideration of new policies or procedures, and members should have that information made available as a routine part of the basic information in a committee report to allow them to evaluate the proposals in the report.

This section should be completed to refer briefly to any potential impact, positive or negative, and more detail should be provided in the body of the report, in Part D. If

no such impact is anticipated then this section should be completed to say “None”.

V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement

The council has entered into a Single Outcome Agreement with its community planning partners as part of its relationship with central government. The Agreement sets common partnership goals and expected outcomes against which the community planning partners’ work can be measured.

The Agreement can be accessed on the intranet.

This section of the report is designed to identify any relevant parts of the Agreement, and to bring attention to the contribution the proposals in the report will be expected to make to the goals and outcomes set out in the Agreement, or to any anticipated adverse impacts on them.

This section should be completed to identify the relevant goals, and to refer briefly to any potential impact, positive or negative, and more detail should be provided in the body of the report, in Part D.

If it is felt that none are relevant, or that there will be no impact as a result of the report’s proposals, then this section should be completed to say “None”.

VI Resources (Financial, Staffing and Assets)

(a) Financial

Consideration should always been given to the impact the decision will have on the financial resources of the council. Reference should be made to how the decision will be funded and accurate costs/values must be included to assist in the decision making process. If “None” is entered, elected members and readers of the report will assume that there are no financial implications. Advice is obtainable through Donald Forrest, Head of Finance and Estates.

(b) Staffing

Reference should be made to any staffing implications arising from the report including, but not exclusively, the creation of new posts both temporary and permanent.

(c) Assets

Again a summarised position regarding the impact the decision will have on the assets of the council should be included to highlight to elected members and readers of the report the main implications for this resource. This has become more important following the approval of the council’s ten year capital investment and asset management strategy.

VI Consideration at PDSP

As part of its decision-making structure, the council operates a system of Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels. Their remit is set out in the Scheme of Administration, and it is their responsibility to examine existing policies and performance under those policies, to consider any revision required to existing

policies, and to examine any new policies, all before any decisions required are taken as full council or committee.

Not all proposals require to go to a PDSP before going to committee for decision, but where the PDSP has been involved then that should be noted in this section, along with the date of the meeting.

More detail should be given in the body of the report (in Part D) about the meeting, and a brief summary or statement of the PDSP's views and recommendations should be included. If there were any problems raised, or dissenting voices, or if the recommendations were changed as a result of the PDSP meeting, then these should be explained.

The PDSP meeting should also be included in Part F, as a background reference.

VIII Other Consultations

It is imperative that authors of reports take care to consider when it is necessary to consult on the details of their report, and with whom. This is especially important when specialised professional advice is required. Consultations that should be considered when writing a report include:-

(a) Public and Member Consultation

Consultation with these stakeholders aims to gather information and opinions on proposals. It is anticipated that consideration at any of the nine local area committees (LAC) or the Community Planning Partnership Board or similar body would be mentioned here. The date of the relevant meeting should be included in the report for reference and in Part D (Terms of Report) a brief summary should be included of the result of the consultation process. Typical consultations within this area would include discussions with elected members, trade unions, community councils and local action groups.

(b) Officer Consultation

This form of consultation is concerned primarily with ensuring that appropriate advice is sought and acted upon. The consultation can include general comment from particular service areas. However the author should also ensure that appropriate professional advice is requested and incorporated into the report.

The council's Financial Regulations state that committee reports must contain a statement of financial implications, and confirmation that the Head of Finance and Estates has verified the financial content of the report.

Therefore authors must consult with Finance Services to confirm that financial information included within the report is both accurate and realistic.

A summary of the main consultations is sufficient and should cover the main issue that was discussed.

7. Terms of Report (Part D)

The terms of the report include the main discussion and details of the report. To assist those reading the report it is helpful to use the following structure:

- Introduction;
- Background;
- Discussion of the decision required, the implications for the council and provision of information to assist in the decision making process; and
- Conclusion.

The terms of the report should only include the salient points relating to the subject and every effort should be made to keep the report to a succinct length without compromising understandability.

Reports should ideally not exceed three pages in length, including the summary of implications, however it is recognised that sometimes this is not practical. Where reports are of excessive length, authors should consider the use of appendices to provide detail. This will help to ensure that the main body of the report is not clouded by a disproportionate amount of detail.

This part should also include the additional detail required when any of the sections in Part C are completed.

8. Conclusion (Part E)

This should contain a short summary of the report, of its expected impact, and provide a brief picture of what will be the positive effect of approving the report.

9. Background References (Part F)

The inclusion of background references/papers is based on the requirements of legislation and including a document in this section may have legal consequences, requiring public disclosure

Include all previous relevant committee meeting references, particularly the last minute reference, to enable reports and minutes to be linked. This section should include any document, other than legislation, to which significant reference is made within the report. Examples of background references that could be used include other council reports, minutes, contracts and tender documentation.

The officer responsible for a report is to prepare a list of background papers relating to the report. That list and a copy of all the documents on the list then requires to be kept open for inspection by elected members and members of the public for four years from the date of the committee meeting.

That right of access is separate to and entirely independent from rights under FOISA, and exemptions which can be claimed under FOISA will not necessarily be available in connection with any such background papers.

“Background papers” are those which the officer responsible for the report considers to contain information upon which the report was based, and which that officer has relied upon to a material extent in preparing the report. The only things which are exempted are published works, and documents which contain “exempt information” or “confidential information”.

By referring to “File held in XXX Services” as a background reference takes the risk of being required to make that entire file available for inspection by members of the public and elected members.

10. Closing Section

(a) Appendices

If there are no appendices attached to the report, type “None” so that members know not to expect to find one. If there are any appendices then they should be listed by number and title, again to inform elected members what to expect in the report.

(b) Contacts

The Contact Person is the officer supervising a project or the author of the report. Failure to include his/her name and phone number will result in contact by members of the public being made directly to the Depute Chief Executive or Head of Service in whose name the report has been prepared. An appropriate name should be provided so that the officer specified as the Contact Person will receive a copy of the Action Note following the meeting.

When specifying the Contact Person, officers should have regard to arrangements for working with elected members set out in the Employee Code of Conduct and the Multi- Member Ward Protocol for Officers. These envisage contact with elected members taking place through a designated Member Liaison Officer, and inclusion of someone other than a designated MLO as the Contact Person may result in elected members by- passing the MLO and going straight to the Contact Person for information.

(c) The date of the report should be the date of the meeting, not the date of writing or submission.

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C. HOW TO CREATE A REPORT FROM THE TEMPLATE

1. Save your Report

Start off with the most recent version of the report template, which is available on the intranet. Reports submitted on superseded versions may not be accepted, and a committee deadline may be missed.

It is advisable to save your report before you start typing it. Select **File** (top of screen), **Save As**, give your report a name (see paragraph 2 below) and then navigate to the folder where you wish to save your report, and click OK. When you have done this, exit from Microsoft Explorer by clicking on the X at the top right-hand corner. Open up your report from Word in the folder in which you saved it.

When you save your report, include the relevant Document Label within the 'footer' at the front page. Reports to be taken in private at a council, committee or other meeting should be marked in the same way. All other reports should be marked as "Data Label: Public". That applies at the agenda-setting stage, to avoid having to change the data Label when the report is approved for the full meeting.

2. Naming your file

Filenames of reports should clearly **identify the subject matter**. For example, a report on repairs to West Lothian House should be named "Repairs to W L House" and not "hwy.234.xyz". Keep the names fairly short, but ensure that they make sense. Be sure to properly identify and name the body to which the report is being presented. The use at the end of the filename of a date in the format "20100831" (*31 August 2010*) is useful.

3. Format of Report

Do not complete the Section on page 1 "Date and Agenda Item"

Ensure that your report is prepared correctly. No Catchwords should be used, (i.e. placing the first word of the next page at the foot of the previous page). Pages must be numbered. Automatic page numbering has been selected for the template and your pages will be automatically numbered for you.

The template uses a variety of font types, size and colour. Please use only Arial, Size 11, Black for the body of the report.

4. Use of Cells

The report template is in **table** format. You must be able to view the outline of the table (gridlines) before you add text. Each "box" you see on your screen is called a **CELL**. You must ensure that you do not enter too much data into one cell. This will cause problems with the format of your report. **TAB** into a new cell each time you commence a new paragraph.

Using cells in this way will ensure a tidy and uniform layout and appearance. Starting a new report from a previous version, or cutting and pasting from a draft Word document, can result in an untidy and difficult to read presentation.

You must strike the Function Key marked F11 to "jump" from one cell to the other. You will

note that each cell contains instructions as to what should be inserted at that particular point. You should overtype the instructions text.

5. Saving Reports

Ensure that the final version of your report is saved without tracked changes showing, since what you send to Committee Services is what will be attached to an agenda and posted on the internet. This is sometimes overlooked, in particular if changes are needed after an agenda-setting meeting.

Officers in Committee Services **do not** read or check reports before they are published.

6. Colour or Black and White

If something in the report or an appendix is in colour and should be copied in colour to non-elected members, be sure to inform Committee Services when you send your report to them. If that is not specifically brought to their attention then black and white copying will result.

Elected members using iPads will have no difficulty viewing documents containing colour.

7. Sending Reports

The council's Standing Orders require that officers send reports to Committee services five clear days before the meeting date. This allows sufficient time for the agenda and its attachments to be prepared, printed, published and delivered. Standing Orders require that to be done four clear days before.

Any report not submitted by the due date will be removed from the agenda. Heads of Service will be notified of any report being removed from the agenda and will be required to notify the Chair of the committee that the report has been withdrawn.

Heads of Service may wish to approach the Chair of a committee in advance of the committee to request that a report submitted after the deadline is added to an agenda or is tabled, although late. In such circumstances the Head of Service will be responsible for informing and liaising with Committee Services to ensure that there are sufficient copies of the report for the committee.

Committee Services can, on request, provide a timetable for meetings of each council body showing dates for agenda-setting meetings, formal meetings and deadlines for submission of reports.

All timetables of meetings can be found by accessing the COINS System using the below link :-

<http://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/default.asp>

D. THE TIMELINE – STAGES IN THE PROCESS

The word “meeting” is used to cover all meetings of all bodies in the council’s decision-making structure for which formal written reports are needed.

This timeline does not take account of any time required for community or stakeholder consultations before a report is ready to go to the meeting, or for time which may have to be spent in the middle of the process if additional consultation is needed.

The timeline is prepared with the submission of a report to Council Executive in mind – the most important decision-making body.

Not all these stages will be found in every case – that will depend on the subject-matter, the importance of the subject-matter of the report, and the particular processes which apply to the meeting at which the report is to be considered. Some reports will stop at the PDSP stage without requiring a formal and binding decision to be made.

Meetings of Council Executive and Education Executive are the most important, and each has an agenda-setting stage where officers attend to explain reports to the Chair and Chief Executive, and answer questions in preparation for the meeting itself. Changes or corrections to reports may be agreed, and they will require to be made and the updated version submitted to Committee Services for the final meeting itself.

Some reports require to meet statutory dates, or dates fixed internally by the council. Others will be dictated by operational or service requirements. Others may not have firm deadlines at all.

Some allowance should be made at most stages for the time which may be involved in possible revisions or amendments which are agreed as the report progresses through its various stages.

Dates of meetings and can be found through the council’s committee information service (Coins) - <http://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/>

Dates for all meetings, including agenda-setting meetings, and deadlines for submission of reports to Committee Services can be found in - <http://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/>

After each meeting, including agenda-setting meetings, Committee Services will issue an Action Note noting briefly the decisions taken and actions required, with the name(s) of the officer responsible beside each.

Ensure that the report is heading for the correct decision-making destination. Remits for each body in the decision-making structure can be found in - <http://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/>

Once a PDSP meeting date is identified, the Lead Officer should be informed and consulted to ensure the item is in the Workplan and on the list for inclusion on the agenda.

The most practical way to meet a deadline is to identify the eventual and final destination for the report, fix as a target the date of the meeting and work backwards from there, trying to anticipate the steps in the process which will be or which may be required.

The council's Standing Orders require that officers send reports to Committee services **five** clear days before the meeting date (i.e., there must be at least five clear days between the meeting and the report reaching Committee Services, leaving out the day of the meeting and the day it is sent). This allows sufficient time for the agenda and its attachments to be prepared, printed, published and delivered. Taking into account the last day the agenda can be issued to councillors, and the practical effect of weekends, these deadlines should be followed:-

DAY OF MEETING	LAST DAY FOR SUBMISSION) (12 noon)
Monday	Monday before
Tuesday	Tuesday before
Wednesday	Wednesday before
Thursday	Thursday before
Friday	Thursday before

Any report not submitted by the due date will be removed from the agenda. Heads of Service will be notified of any report being removed from the agenda and will be required to notify the Chair of the committee that the report has been withdrawn. They will require to make special arrangements with the Chair to allow late inclusion, and to liaise with Committee Services once permission is given.

Potential stages in the report procedure

1. Identify date of meeting
2. First draft
3. Advice from Legal Services, Finance & Estates, Equalities Officer, Performance Team etc
4. Approval of draft by Head of Service
5. Briefing for Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive
6. Attendance at EMT or CMT
7. Briefing for Executive Councillor
8. Briefing for Leader of the Council
9. Political Group Meeting (Monday evenings)
10. Approval from Head of Service for submission to Committee Services for PDSP meeting
11. Submission to Committee Services for PDSP meeting – 5 clear days before the meeting
12. Agenda and reports issued to members and published on the internet – 4 clear days before the meeting
13. Briefing of opposition member(s), via Group Meeting or otherwise
14. Preparation for addressing PDSP meeting and answering questions

15. PDSP meeting
16. Action Note issued by Committee Services
17. Conversion of PDSP report to Council/Education Executive report to incorporate views and recommendations from PDSP meeting
18. Final approval from Head of Service for submission to Committee Services for agenda- setting meeting
19. Report to Committee Services for agenda-setting meeting – 4 clear days before the meeting
20. Agenda and reports issued to Leader of the Council and EMT members – 3 clear days before the meeting
21. Prepare for agenda-setting meeting, anticipate questions and bring additional information to allow answers to be given on the spot
22. Agenda-setting meeting
23. Action Note issued by Committee Services
24. Amendments or corrections to report following agenda-setting meeting
25. Final version of report to Committee Services incorporating any changes agreed at agenda-setting meeting – 5 clear days before the meeting date
26. Agenda and reports issued to members and published on the internet – 4 clear days before the meeting
27. Briefing of opposition member(s), via group Meeting or otherwise
28. Prepare to address committee and anticipate likely questions, bring additional information to help
29. Meeting
30. Receive and check Action Note and take required actions

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E. ATTENDANCE AND PRESENTATION AT COMMITTEE

It is the responsibility of Heads of Service to ensure that appropriate officers are in attendance to either present the report on behalf of the Head of Service and/or to assist the Head of Service in responding to any questions elected members may have.

Officers should prepare for the meeting, and should not take it for granted that their report will be well-received by all members. They should anticipate potential areas of questioning from elected members based on the subject matter, content of the report, recommendation and/or decision making requirements.

Officers should address elected members either as Chair or as Councillor.

Officers should provide a succinct presentation of the report. That does not mean reading verbatim from the report, but providing a short explanation to help introduce the report and its subject-matter and help provide the committee with a further understanding of the report. In doing so officers should seek to highlight the key elements of the report whilst at the same time addressing any potential questions that they would anticipate based on the content of the report.

There is no need to stand when speaking.

Officers should speak clearly and consciously more slowly than in everyday speech.

Answers should be given through the Chair and officers should not engage in discussion or an exchange directly with another member without the Chair's permission

For PDSP attendance officers shall also appraise themselves of the non-elected member representatives that are likely to be in attendance. Committee Services will provide officers with details upon request.

If an officer is unable to provide the elected member with a full and complete answer to a question, the officer should offer to provide the required additional information at a later date. Such information should be provided to all members of the committee or PDSP by email no later than 5 working days after the committee date, or by a later date as agreed with the Chair.

Lead Officers in conjunction with Heads of Service shall ensure that appropriate cross-service representation is in attendance at PDSPs when performance reports are being presented.

To assist officers in preparing for attendance at committee, arrangements should be made for training in report-writing to take place through Committee Services.

Officers should also first of all observe meetings to obtain a picture of what goes on and how officers should behave. Gaining experience at smaller-scale meetings such as Local Area Committees would be advisable.

For meeting rooms with microphones or other technology, officers should attend in advance to familiarise themselves with how things work.