

City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday 14 December 2023

Procedural Standing Orders Update

Executive/routine
Wards

Executive

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To agree one of the options set out in paragraph 4.9.
- 1.2 To agree whether any change to Standing Orders should apply to Council meetings only or also to committees.
- 1.3 To agree any change to Standing Orders would come into effect on 15 December 2023 and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to take such actions and make such minor adjustments to the documents as may be necessary to implement the decision of the Council.

Dr. Deborah Smart

Executive Director of Corporate Services

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Procedural Standing Orders Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council is asked to consider revising Standing Orders following discussion with Group Leaders.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council on 28 September 2023 considered a report on governance documentation which sought approval for revised Procedural Standing Orders. It was agreed to adopt the revised version to come into effect from 3 November 2023.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The following Standing Order 25 was introduced in December 2020 and extended in March 2021 to include committees, other than quasi-judicial meetings:
- 4.1.1 “At 5pm for Council and committee meetings excluding quasi-judicial committees and items, and meetings that begin in the afternoon, unless the Council or committee expressly agrees otherwise, motions and amendments will be moved and seconded formally with no debate, before a vote is then taken for each remaining item of business.”
- 4.2 At its meeting in September 2023, Council also approved the following addendum in relation to Standing Order 25 (End of Session Decisions):
- 4.2.1 “Given that no resolution is proposed to the outstanding issue of ceasing to debate items when the guillotine falls on debate at 5pm remits the following proposal to a meeting of Group Leaders for discussion:
- 4.2.1.1 That the guillotine for debate falls at 4pm and from this point each motion and amendment is moved and seconded with a time limit of one minute for speeches, thus ensuring greater openness, transparency and accountability in the Council’s decision making by allowing councillors to briefly explain their motion and to improve the understanding of what decision is being made by allowing time for acceptance and rejection of any amendments and addendums.

4.2.1.2 The outcome of this discussion to be reported back to the Council meeting of 2nd November 2023.”

- 4.3 A meeting of Group Leaders was held on 25 October 2023 to consider the proposal. Group Leaders were supportive of a change to the current Standing Order and asked that officers review previous Council meetings to determine the impact the proposed change to the 5pm ‘end of sessions’ rule would have. It was agreed to report back to Council with options in December.
- 4.4 The Council meetings in June, August and September 2023 have been reviewed and the following items were remaining at 5pm:
- 4.4.1 June 2023 – 6 motions, 6 congratulatory motions and questions
 - 4.4.2 August 2023 – 14 motions, 3 congratulatory motions and questions
 - 4.4.3 September 2023 – 7 motions, 4 congratulatory motions and questions
- 4.5 These items were required to be moved and seconded formally without debate, and no supplementary questions were able to be asked to Council Questions.
- 4.6 Taking into account the number of motions and amendments to each of the remaining items, if Council began the ‘end of session’ time at 4pm with the proposed one minute speeches, the motions sections would have concluded by approximately 4.50pm in June, 5pm in August and 4.50pm in September. This would also have left some time for council questions before the current typical meeting end time of 5.30pm.
- 4.7 As well as consideration of the 4pm start time, an earlier start time of 3.15pm was also suggested at the group leaders’ meeting which would allow time for an additional break before the beginning of the ‘end of session’ period. This longer period does not appear to be necessary to deal with motions at Council but would allow for supplementary Council questions to be considered. The timing of breaks would continue to be at the discretion of the Lord Provost or Convener, at least every two hours, as per Standing Order 9.2.
- 4.8 Congratulatory motions could continue to be moved and seconded formally and with no debate.
- 4.9 The following options are proposed for Council to consider:
- 4.9.1 Retaining Standing Order 25 in its current form;
 - 4.9.2 Removing Standing Order 25 entirely;
 - 4.9.3 Amending Standing Order 25 to introduce a 4pm start time for end of session decisions and allowing one minute for speeches to move and second motions and amendments, with no debate; or
 - 4.9.4 Amending Standing Order 25 to introduce a 3.15pm start time for end of session decisions and allowing one minute for speeches to move and second motions and amendments, with no debate.

- 4.10 Council is also asked to determine whether any change should apply only to Council meetings or to all meetings including committees. As committee business consists mostly of officer reports rather than motions, Council may wish to retain the current 5pm 'end of sessions' rule for committees. This would allow an additional hour for consideration of reports and questions to officers.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Revised Standing Orders which reflect the decision of Council will be implemented and published online.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no financial impact associated with this report.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There is no financial impact associated with this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There is no climate and nature emergency impact associated with this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Engagement has taken place with Group Leaders and no conflicts or risks have been identified.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Governance Documentation](#) – Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services
- 10.2 [City of Edinburgh Council – Minute of 28 September 2023](#)
- 10.3 [City of Edinburgh Council – 28 September 2023 – webcast](#)

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None.