



## **Receipt of late Correspondence**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 At previous meetings concern has been expressed by Members regarding the amount of papers presented to the Councillors on the day of the meeting. To help understand how this issue arises we need to look at the report writing process. For this meeting the bulk of the report had to be prepared in advance of Chair's briefing session held on Wednesday 11 January. Between that date and Tuesday 17 January the report was finalised bringing together all subsequent correspondence received following the first draft. On 17 January the completed report is sent to the printers, being distributed to the Councillors on 19 January. This allows the statutory requirements to be met.
- 2.2 As a consequence of meeting our obligations any correspondence relevant to the meeting that is received after the printing date, in this case 17 January, is copied for Members and distributed to the Committee by courier up until the day before the meeting unless the report already specifies that letters are placed in the Members' rooms or the Council Chamber foyer where the copies are put in the relevant location.
- 2.3 It is quite conceivable for relevant correspondence to be received on the day of the meeting, particularly for popular items where additional comment is made in response to the published Committee report. The procedure for ensuring Members receive this late correspondence, which is often beyond the statutory 21 day notification period, is to distribute copies by hand before the meeting.
- 2.4 I can understand the frustration expressed by some Members regarding the potential amount of very late correspondence received on the day of the meeting, but this is something that we have no control over. We have a duty to take all relevant correspondence into account in reaching a decision. I would not wish to suggest a cut-off time/date for receipt of correspondence but we must get the message across to our customers that a letter handed in just before the start of the meeting is unacceptably late and is unlikely to receive the same degree of analysis by the Committee as one received during the consultation period. In addition I would not wish Members to feel that they should defer an application just to be able to digest any late correspondence as this would undoubtedly lead to the adoption of delaying/spoiling tactics by objectors making late submissions.

- 2.5 Members can be reassured that officers will continue the usual practice of summarising all late items to update the report and inform Members.
- 2.6 In view of the concerns raised by Members I have asked the Legal Division to consider the implications of not accepting late representations and intend to report any additional comments to a future meeting.