

CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2018 AT THE NORTH WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Richard Britton and Cllr Jon Hubbard

24 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Nick Murry.

25 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2018 were presented and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record.

26 **Protocol 1: Councillor-Officer Relations**

The Focus Group considered further changes to the Protocol following their last meeting. In particular the Focus Group considered wording in relation to councillors' access to confidential or exempt information, and recommended that a practical guidance note be included within the constitution in addition to the summary paragraphs listed in Protocol 1, to ensure all councillors were aware of the legal requirements through practical examples.

Other changes were suggested, and it was agreed a final version of the Protocol, including reorganisation of the content, should be circulated to the Focus Group for approval ahead of the next meeting.

Resolved:

To circulate a final draft of proposed changes to the Focus Group by email, for agreement and recommendation to Standards Committee.

27 **Part 11A: Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The Focus Group considered updates to Part 11A which had been proposed by the relevant officer team.

In discussion the Focus Group noted the unusual situation where by the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel were contained within the wider Corporate Parenting Strategy, which had been appended to the Constitution in its entirety. The Focus Group considered that after several years of this being the case, and the need to make multiple changes, as well as the specific content of the strategy, it was not appropriate for this one policy to be included within the constitution in such a fashion.

Therefore, it was considered that the sections relating solely to the terms of reference should be extracted and included within the constitution, but that the strategy itself be removed.

Resolved:

To recommend a revised Part 11A to contain only the procedural elements relating to the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

28 **Part 4: Council Rules of Procedure**

The Focus Group considered further changes to Part 4, noting it would serve as a format template for all other sections of the constitution in future to ensure a consistent presentation.

The Focus Group went through the proposed part 4, confirming that arrangements for secret ballot in council meetings were still necessary despite the use of electronic votes, and considered various rules relating to rights of reply and debates. It was felt that the mover of an amendment should be entitled to a right of reply just as the mover of the original motion was. Additionally, that minutes of a meeting should record when a councillor left the meeting.

After discussion, it was,

Resolved:

For a final version of part 4 for recommendation to the Standards Committee to be circulated by email to the Focus Group for agreement.

29 **Urgent Items**

The Focus Group were informed that following the acceptance by the Cabinet Member and endorsement by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee of recommendations by the Planning Committee System Task

Group on 5 June 2018, changes were proposed to Protocol 4 of the Constitution to harmonise the arrangements for planning site visits. The changes would be presented to the Cabinet Member and the Chairman of the Task Group for comment before circulation to the Focus Group by email in advance of the next meeting.

(Duration of meeting: 1330 - 1540)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115