

CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION FOCUS GROUP MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2019 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Graham Wright, Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Mr Richard Baxter

Also Present:

Cllr Christopher Newbury

7 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Richard Britton and Jon Hubbard

8 **Notes of the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 were presented for consideration and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record.

9 **Protocol 12: Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints**

As requested by the Standards Committee the Focus Group discussed the arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, in particular in relation to delays in processing complaints and the extent to which these were resourcing issues or a consequence of the process itself and if a more efficient and effective arrangement was possible and preferred.

After a lengthy discussion it was agreed to explore proposal to replace the two opportunities for review sub-committees in the process with standing, regularly scheduled assessment sub-committees. This would enhance the role of members in determining the outcome of all complaints, not only those which were requested to be reviewed, would provide clarity for public and members on dates for decisions, and be administratively simpler.

It was requested these and other amendments in relation to strengthening the requirement to submit details by certain timescales or else a complaint should fall, should be brought back for consideration at a future meeting.

10 **Part 4: Petitions Scheme**

The Focus Group discussed Part 4A of the Constitution in relation to the Petitions Scheme. In considering issues of length and structure of any debate on petitions, as well as clarity for members and the public as to deadlines for submission or verification of any petition, the combination of similar petitions and other issues, it was agreed that significant revisions were necessary.

It was requested that officers examine and report on arrangements in other authorities for ideas of best practice, and bring back proposals at a future meeting.

11 **Monitoring Officer Changes**

The Focus Group received revised Parts 9 and 13 of the Constitution. It was confirmed the changes were only in relation to correction of errors and reformatting, and therefore it was agreed that the changes should be made by the Monitoring Officer using his delegated powers under Article 15.3.2 of the Constitution.

12 **Forward Plan and Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10 April 2019.

13 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.30 - 4.30 pm)

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

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