

MINUTES

of the meeting of the

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

on 6 November 2019 at 6.30p.m.

Present:

Councillor H. Ayres (Chair)

Councillors R.H. Ambor, K. Bentley, N.A. Dudley, D.G. Jones, N.M Walsh and I. Wright

Also in Attendance –

Parish Councillors, P.S. Jackson and J. Saltmarsh

Designated Independent Person:

Mrs. C. Gosling

1. **Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Chiswell. No substitutions were made.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2019 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

3. **Public Question Time**

No questions were asked, or statements made.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

All members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any of the items of business on the meeting's agenda.

5. **Chair's Announcements**

No announcements were made.

6. **Polling District Review**

The Committee were informed that the Council undertook a review of its polling districts every five years and that Full Council had delegated the authority to undertake this review, to the Governance Committee. The Committee heard that the review took place to assess how electors' needs could be better met by the Council and focused on guidance from the Electoral Commission. It was noted that factors including, feedback from recent elections, turnout stats and feedback from drop in sessions were also considered. It was noted that the Council currently had 78 polling districts and that it agreed this would increase to 81. The Committee heard that initially the proposals had been set to take place from 1st December but would now be held back due to the December General Election. Therefore, the proposed arrangements would be in place

for the next scheduled elections in May 2020. It was noted that this would allow officers time to properly implement the changes and inform those affected by the changes. It was also noted that some of the changes may be implemented for the December general election where there were availability issues.

The Committee considered the ten proposals outlined in the report and made the below comments.

The polling place allocated to the polling district Beehive Lane will be relocated to St Pauls Church.

The Committee heard that concerns had been raised by Ward Councillors regarding access to the car park. Officers informed the Committee that after a site visit it was recognised it could be an issue at peak times and that therefore the car park would be closed, other than for disabled use, to encourage on road parking which was sufficient. It was also noted that the school normally used in the area was not available for December and the Committee therefore agreed, that this element of the proposals be put in place for the General Election.

The polling place for the polling district Woodhall will be relocated to the site of St John Payne Catholic School.

The Committee agreed that this was a sensible change as it would avoid using a portacabin which had caused various issues in previous years. The Committee were informed that the school were happy to accommodate for the December General Election and therefore agreed, that this element of the proposals be put in place for the General Election.

The polling place in the polling district Collingwood will be relocated to the site of Collingwood Primary School.

The Committee heard that this change was being proposed as currently all Collingwood residents had to travel to Chetwood (the neighbouring polling district) to vote. Therefore, it was recommended to use Collingwood Primary School instead due to its convenient location, which would also prevent four polling stations all being at the Chetwood Centre. The Committee heard that the school had expressed concerns and may consider it necessary to close so it could be used as a polling station. Some comments had been received from parents raising concerns on this matter. A member of the Committee expressed their concern with the proposal, regarding that they would likely have to close due to being a small site. They also stated that the current Chetwood centre had a big car park and that the parish council had not unanimously endorsed the proposal. Officers clarified that the use of schools was always a last resort and all other buildings were considered beforehand, but in this instance the school was the only suitable premises within the polling district. The Committee asked officers to monitor the situation. It was agreed that the Committee be provided with feedback on the use of Collingwood Primary School. It was also noted that in the future, as elections were normally scheduled in advance, inset days could be utilised to minimise disruption.

The Committee agreed that the ten proposals should be put in place and were pleased with the improvements put forward for electors. It was also noted that only two of the proposals, St Pauls Church and St John Payne school would be in place for the December General Election. Officers also informed the Committee that for the other changes, letters would be sent to residents detailing any relevant changes.

RESOLVED that;

1. the amendments outlined within the report are approved and implemented on publication of the full register for future electors, including the reallocation of polling district codes for administrative purposes and;
2. the proposals for the Beehive Lane and Woodhall polling districts be implemented for the December General Election but the rest be postponed until 2020 and;
3. the proposal for the Collingwood polling district be monitored and feedback be provided to the Committee.

(6.30pm to 7.05pm)

7. Constitution Part 5.6: Code of Conduct for Employees/Workers

The Committee considered a report detailing an updated draft Code of Conduct. The Committee were informed that a minor review had taken place and the changes had already been agreed with the union. It was noted that as it involved a change to the Constitution, the Committee would have to recommend the new document to Full Council. A member of the Committee agreed to pass on some grammatical changes to officers after the meeting. Two issues were also raised at paragraph 1.5 of the proposed code, regarding the use of the word protect and at paragraph 15 regarding the section 'preventing abuse by promoting good practice'. The Committee agreed to delegate to the Monitoring Officer and Chair the authority, to make slight amendments to this section before it is recommended to Council.

RESOLVED that;

1. the changes to the revised Code of Conduct (Part 5.6 of the Constitution) and supporting Equality Impact Assessment be noted and;
2. the Council be recommended to approve the amendments to its Constitution detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and;
3. the authority to make minor changes relating to paragraph 1.5 and 15 be delegated to the Monitoring Officer after consultation with the Committee Chair.

(7.32pm to 7.41pm)

8. Monitoring Officer Report

The Committee received a report updating them on progress with Standards regime issues and an update on the use of Section 32 of the Localism Act, to withhold home addresses from members interest forms.

It was noted by the Committee that one new complaint had been received which had led to no further action.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the decision had been taken after the May elections to use Section 32 of the Localism Act, to withhold home addresses from register of interest forms for City Councillors. It was noted that the Monitoring Officer had discussed the matter with the Chair at the time. The Committee agreed that the approach was sensible and that members still had the opportunity to wish to opt in and have their address displayed on the form. The Committee agreed that the practice should also be put in place for Parish Councillors. The Monitoring Officer therefore stated that work would be undertaken to put this in place for Parish Councillors as well. It was also

noted that Parish Council clerks would be informed of this and City Councillors would be informed that they can opt back in, if they wished to display their address on their form.

RESOLVED that;

1. the current statistical information as to complaints made be noted and published on the Council's website as set out in the appendix and;
2. the Monitoring Officer continues to withhold members home addresses from the register of interests on the website under Section 32 of the Localism Act 2011 and that this be extended to Parish Councillors and;
3. City and Parish Councillors be notified of this and be informed that they could opt in to have their address still displayed on their register of interest forms.

(7.41pm to 7.58pm)

9. **Local Government Ethical Standards**

The Committee considered a report detailing the elements of best practice recommended by the Committee on Standards on Public Life. It was noted that the majority of the examples were already in place and that a couple needed minor work as set out in the report. The Committee heard that the future work programme would help to address those that needed some work.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted and;
2. the recommendations already being followed and the actions for others to be followed in the future be noted.

(7.58pm to 8.04pm)

10. **Work Programme**

The Committee received a report informing them of their future work programme. It was noted that the programme was now set out over a two-year period. The Committee were informed that the programme included reviews of documents such as the Councillors Code of Conduct and other policies. It was also noted that at the next meeting in January 2020, a pre-hearing procedure would be looked at by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee's work programme as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

(8.04pm to 8.09pm)

11. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business to discuss.

Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for Item 12 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

12. Recruitment of Independent Person

The Committee were informed that the Council's Constitution made provision for the appointment of two Independent Person's. It was noted that a vacancy had become available and the Committee were asked to make a recommendation for appointment to Full Council. The Committee were therefore asked to consider the one application received from Mrs Mills and whether they should recommend their appointment to Full Council.

Mrs Mills attended the meeting and answered questions from the Committee on her previous experience and why she had applied for the role. Mrs Mills explained she had worked in Local Government her whole career and had a wide experience on governance matters.

The Committee agreed that they were pleased with the application and the answers provided and wished to recommend Mrs Mills appointment to Full Council.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to Full Council that Mrs Mills be appointed to the vacant Independent person position.

(7.05pm to 7.32pm)

The meeting closed at 8.09 p.m.

Chair