

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Pett (Chairman)

Cllr. McGarvey (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Clark, Fittock and Walshe

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Ms. Chetram

8. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 10 July 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

9. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations were made.

10. Actions arising from the last meeting

There were none.

11. Governance Review

Members considered the report which advised that the District Council's draft recommendations for changes to the warding of Shoreham Parish and a change to the boundary between the parishes of Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald had been published on 30 July 2014, and the consultation period had closed on 29 August 2014. The Electoral Services Manager reported that no representations had been received, and that there had been no opposition to the proposals submitted by Shoreham Parish to create a new ward of Romney Street.

The report also outlined the proposal to amend the boundary between Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald Parishes in the vicinity of Bowzell Green, and advised that the consequential change to the Brasted, Chevening & Sundridge and Seal & Weald Wards of the District Council would be dealt with by The Boundary Commission and along with everything else, come into effect at the joint District Council and Parish Councils elections on 7 May 2015. The next stage of the review was for the District Council to publish its final recommendations by the end of November 2014.

One of the recommendations of the report was that the number of parish councillors for the Romney Street Ward, the Shoreham Ward and The Well Hill Hundreds Ward of the Parish of Shoreham be 1, 6 and 1 respectively. Some Members had been lobbied outside of the consultation period that it would be more appropriate to be 1, 5, 2 respectively, which would more fairly represent constituents. The current

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recommendation was that one Councillor would represent 159 in the Romney Street Ward; 6 would represent the 713 people of Shoreham (119 constituents per representative); and 211 constituents of Well Hill Hundreds Ward would have one Councillor. The alternative suggestion would be 1 representative for 159 constituents; 5 representing 143 each; and 2 representing 106 each.

The Chairman pointed out that this information had missed the consultation period in which no objections had been raised, and pointed out that if Members were minded to change the recommendation it would need to go back out to consultation and would therefore not be in place ready for the publication of the register on 28 November 2014 ready for the election on 7 May 2015.

Members queried how the publication of the register affected the decision, and how long any further consultation would take.

Action 1: The Electoral Services Manager to find out how long any further consultation would take if Members were minded to go with the suggestion of 1, 5, 2.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- a) following consultation on the District Council's draft recommendation, a Romney Street Ward be created in the Parish of Shoreham;
- b) following consultation on the District Council's draft recommendation, the number of parish councillors for the Romney Street Ward, the Shoreham Ward and The Well Hill Hundreds Ward of the Parish of Shoreham be 1, 6 and 1 respectively; and
- c) following consultation on the District Council's draft recommendation, the boundary between the parishes of Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald be amended in the vicinity of Bowzell Green.

12. Governance Arrangements

The Committee had been tasked with continuing to investigate future Governance arrangements in general to allow newly elected Members in 2015 to consider future governance. The Chief Officer Legal & Governance presented a report setting out some research carried out on behalf of the Committee further to the previous meeting, on the advantages and disadvantages of the Committee System and the Leader and Cabinet System.

The Chief Officer Legal & Governance advised that the majority of Councils were still operating under the Cabinet style of governance which included the whole of Kent except that Canterbury City Council had passed a resolution to revert back to the Committee system which would be actioned at the next Annual Council in 2015. Sevenoaks Council had adopted in 2013 a hybrid model, with five Cabinet Advisory Committees although

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this was still essentially a Leader and Cabinet Executive governance system. The new hybrid model had been reviewed by the Governance Committee over the following year which involved Member consultations resulting in some changes being made for the municipal year 2014/15. The most notable of these changes was the complete separation of the scrutiny function. The changes had alleviated some of the concerns that Members had voiced as set out in paragraph 8 of the report.

Councillor Walshe reported that he had spoken with the Leader of the London Borough of Sutton, which had changed to a committee system in 2012, who was happy for the Committee to visit and speak with him about the experience and advantages as they saw them. The Leader there had advised that apart from set up costs, it had not been administratively more expensive.

Members noted that if a committee structure was sought it would tie the next Council to the structure for five years. It was thought that the changes made to the present structure at Annual Council had seen an improvement. It was agreed that further correspondence with the London Borough of Sutton was worth pursuing.

Resolved: That

- a) following Council's recommendation on 1 April 2014, that the Governance Committee continue to investigate future Governance arrangements in general to allow the newly elected administration in 2015 to consider future governance;
- b) the information and research taken place to date as set out in this report, be noted; and
- c) further research be undertaken with particular reference to the contact made with London Borough of Sutton and the research results from Cornwall's independent review carried out in 2011/12, for a final recommendation and report to the meeting in February 2015.

13. Recording and The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chief Officer Legal & Governance presented a report advising on the successful recording of Full Council on a trial basis and asking the Committee to consider and recommend to Council the roll out of recording all meetings of Full Council, Development Control and Licensing Hearings along with the draft protocol agreed at Council on 1 April 2014.

The report also advised that following the implementation of The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the public were now allowed to report all meetings via social media of any kind such as tweeting, blogging or via Facebook including the filming of meetings. The Regulations also required the Council to make publicly available a 'decision record' of certain decisions which officers had taken on behalf of the council.

It was noted that the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 also applied to Town and Parish Council's and Members were concerned as to their awareness of this.

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Action 2: The Chief Officer Legal & Governance to circulate a link to the report bringing the Town and Parish Council's attention to the new regulations.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- a) following Full Council being successfully recorded on a trial basis all meetings of Full Council, Development Control Committee and Licensing Hearings be recorded from now on;
- b) Officers be given discretion to record such other public meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and their committees, sub-committees or joint committees as they see fit; and
- c) following the implementation of The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the amendments to the Constitution together with a Protocol on Reporting on Meetings as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved.

14. Work Plan

The work plan was noted. Members discussed whether a meeting in November was required. It was agreed that the date be kept for the moment and reassessed nearer the time.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.53 PM

CHAIRMAN