

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Pett (Chairman)

Cllr. Scott (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Clack, Layland, London, and McGarvey

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Halford

Cllrs. Dr Canet and Firth were also present.

1. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on the 7 November 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

3. Actions from the previous meeting

The actions were noted.

4. Constitutional Changes Regarding Development Control Delegations

The report sought the Committee's recommendation to Council to authorise an amendment to the constitution to enable written requests for consideration of planning applications by the Development Control Committee to be submitted no later than the relevant consultation expiry date. The aim was to extend the opportunity for applications to be referred to Committee and overcome any confusion due to differing deadlines.

Members discussed the wording of the recommendation and agreed to remove the phrase 'as he sees fit' from the recommendation.

The Chairman moved the recommendation within the report subject to the amendment discussed above and it was

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to amend the Constitution to enable written requests for consideration of planning applications by the

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Development Control Committee to be submitted no later than the relevant consultation expiry date.

5. 2018 Parliamentary Boundary Review

The Chairman presented a report which set out for Members information on the final proposals from the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the Parliamentary Boundaries for Sevenoaks Wards. The proposal, subject to debate and approval by Parliament, would take effect from the next scheduled general election in 2022.

Further information to Appendix A was [tabled](#) in response to a request by a Member of the Committee for information on the number of District Councillors per ward and number of electors per Councillor.

Members questioned if the Boundary Commission's review submitted in 2018 would affect future Parliamentary Boundary work.

Action 1: Chief Officer Corporate Services to provide further information on the likely impact of the timescales of the current Parliamentary Boundary Review on any BCE future workplan with regards to Parliamentary boundaries.

Resolved: That the final recommendations of the Boundary Commission for England for a revised Parliamentary Boundary for Sevenoaks be noted.

6. Members' Parental Leave

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report which proposed steps towards incorporating a Parental Leave Policy for Members into the Constitution. Councillor Scott shared with the Committee her experiences of becoming a mother whilst a Councillor.

Four Councils in England had a Parental Leave Policy in operation which could be consulted if a Policy were to be introduced. Members were advised that any policy would need to be drafted mindful of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 which sets out that if a Councillor fails to attend any meetings for a period of six months they automatically cease to be a Member. Approving a Member absence in excess of 6 months was the responsibility of full Council and Members Allowances would not be affected by such an absence.

It was noted that although measures were already in place for Members requiring prolonged absence, a formal policy would offer additional protection and support. In the instance of prolonged absence in single seat wards it was proposed that Members could offer cross-ward support. Suggestions for practical consideration which could be taken into account were changing the public contact details available for the relevant Member and them receiving weekly updates on their ward.

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Members discussed if a section on Parental Leave could be included in the Welcome Pack given to new and returning Members following a Local Election. It was considered if a wider 'compassionate leave' policy might be more appropriate to also cover sickness and bereavement. Members agreed that they would like to adopt a broad 'Councillor Absence Policy' rather than a policy restricted to particular types of leave. Members considered how a leave policy may serve to diversify individuals standing in future elections and showcase the Council as an understanding and progressive organisation.

Co-opting Members of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee to the Working Group was discussed, with a maximum number of Working Group Members being 5.

Resolved: That a working party of up to five Members selected by the Chairman of the Governance Committee be formed to draft a Councillor Absence Policy and report on progress to the next meeting.

7. Work Plan

Members agreed that the Councillor Absence Working Group should report back to the Governance meeting on 12 February 2019.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.50 PM

CHAIRMAN