

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Firth (Chairman)

Cllr. Pett (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Barnes, Bosley, Dyball, Eyre, Halford, Mrs. Hunter, Lake, McGarvey, Pearsall and Pett

Cllr. Dr. Canet was also present.

12. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 October 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

14. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

15. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, tabled her [update](#) and gave Members reading time and opportunity to ask questions.

16. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

17. Electoral Registration and Elections

The Chief Officer Corporate Services, presented the report which set out the current legislative position for electoral registration and elections and presented the current situation for digital elections, including the use of digital in elections internationally, and electoral pilots in the UK.

For information it set out the range of service improvements which the Council would seek to make to its own electoral registration and election processes within the scope of the current legislative framework in which it was required to operate. The improvements would enable the Council to deliver efficiencies, enhance and automate processes and further improve the service delivered to customers.

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In response to questions the Acting Electoral Services Manager advised that with the exception of three documents there was more scope to send information electronically. However it was only optional for electors to provide email addresses. It was not possible to change the prescribed forms, but it might be possible to change covering letters to encourage the channel shift to electronic delivery where allowed. A flyer was also suggested. Members also thought that an FAQ would be helpful, and more publicity in InShape.

Action 1: Investigate and report back on options and costs for encouraging email address information such as amending covering letters, use of flyers and a frequently asked questions leaflet (FAQ).

With regards to electoral pilots there were to be more in May 2018 in response to the report by Sir Eric Pickles into tackling electoral fraud. Local authorities had been invited to apply to trial different types of identification, including forms of photo ID such as driving licences and passports, or formal correspondence such as a utilities bill to prove their address, backed by a signature check. As there were no scheduled elections in the Sevenoaks District Council in 2018 the Council had not applied to be a pilot but would consider any future opportunities.

Action 2: A written update on the progress of the electoral services review be presented to the Committee at the October meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

18. Quercus 7 Limited - Shareholder's Agreement

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services presented the report for information. Members had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify their understanding. He confirmed that advice was being sought on whether a subsidiary company could be created to provide a service. It was also noted that there was the ability to appoint 'observers' to Board meetings and that the minutes of such meetings could be made available to Councillors on demand but were not public documents.

Action 3: Investigate and report back on the advantages and disadvantages of appointing member "observers" for Board meetings.

Resolved: That the report and appendix be noted.

19. Work Plan

The work plan was noted and the following additions agreed:

21 March 2017

- Update on Corporate Health & Safety
- Equalities Action plan

6 June 2017

- Licensing Update
- Electoral Services (see Action 1 Minute 17 above)

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17 October 2017

- Update on Electoral Services
- Quercus 7 update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.29 PM

CHAIRMAN

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