

Governance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 commencing at 2.30 pm

Present: Cllr. McArthur (Chairman)

Cllr. Penny Cole (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnes, Scott and Skinner

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Clayton

Cllrs. Horwood, Manston, Robinson and Streatfeild were also present.

1. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. Actions from the previous meeting

Members noted the completed action had been circulated via email.

4. Financial Procedural Rules and Contract Procedure Rules Update

The Head of Finance presented the report which provided recommendations to the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules to ensure sound financial Management continued. It was an essential part of good governance as well as longer term financial planning. The rules were reviewed regularly by officers, but brought forward to Committee when there were significant changes.

Members discussed the report and Members expressed their thanks for the amendments that had been made following the last meeting of the Governance Committee, as it was considered these changes would assist with the financial management of the Council. Members discussed how often the procedure rules were updated and considered it important for the Governance Committee to review it on an annual basis. The Chairman used her discretion and allowed a visiting Member to address the Committee. In response to points made, the Head of Finance advised that training would be given following the adoption of the updated rules.

Governance Committee - 11 July 2024

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- i) The Financial Procedure Rules (Appendix A) be adopted with effect from 1 August 2024;
- ii) the Contract Procedure Rules (Appendix B) be adopted with effect from 1 August 2024;

5. Re-Constitution of Member Working Group

Members considered the report which recommended that the Electoral Review working group be reconstituted to allow the Members of the Working Group to continue to work through the various stages of the electoral review.

Resolved: That the working group consisting of Cllr Michael Horwood (Chairman), Cllr Kim Bayley, Cllr Graham Clack, Cllr Laura Manston, Cllr Elizabeth Purves, Cllr Lynda Harrison (consultant member) and Cllr Margot McArthur (consultant member) be re-confirmed.

6. Electoral Review - Council Size Submission

Members considered the report which proposed recommendations for the council size from May 2027 following the work of the Members' Working Group and for the Council size to be agreed by Council for submission. The review was part of the electoral review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which evaluated the number of Councillors required and would review warding patterns within the District Boundary.

The Chairman of the Working Group set out the work undertaken by the working group and the information used to reach the proposed council size of 48 Members from May 2027. It was important that due consideration be given to neighbouring authorities in terms of geographical location and in size. In response to questions Members were advised that based on 48 Members, the number of electors per councillor would be just over 2,000. This was not too dissimilar to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council who had 2,300. Consideration had also been given to Sevenoaks District being fully parished and how this could have an impact.

The report set out the proposed reduction and impact of the reduction on various areas of the council to ensure members were aware of the proposed changes and to obtain support to the proposal made by the working group.

Members were asked to consider the proposal whilst Members were advised that they were still able to make their own suggestions to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Governance Committee - 11 July 2024

Members discussed the proposal.

Resolved: That Council be recommended to propose a Council Size of 48 District Councillors to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

7. Protocol on Webcasting and Electronic Voting

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report on Protocol on Webcasting and Electronic voting which provided an update on the electronic voting system and webcasting system together with email and verbal feedback received from Members. The report sought members confirmation of the Protocol and any further instructions as required.

Members discussed the feedback received from the electronic voting system and the comments made therein with members attention brought to the clarification of a recorded vote within the report. It was considered whether an electronic vote was required on simple votes, such as the Minutes. Further discussion took place on whether electronic voting impacted discussion and it was considered that it did not have a negative impact. Further discussion took place on webcasting of meetings.

The Chairman used her discretion and allowed a visiting Members to address the Committee, who expressed her thanks to Officers for the work put in to making the electronic voting system practicable.

Resolved: That it be recommend to Council that the Protocol on Webcasting and Electronic Voting be confirmed in line with the instructions of Members.

8. Work Plan

The work plan was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 3.35 pm

CHAIRMAN