

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Councillors Commission** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Monday, 30 September 2019 at 3.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R Blaney (Chairman)

Councillor L Dales, Councillor Mrs G Dawn, Councillor Mrs L Hurst and Councillor P Peacock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor K Girling

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brailsford, Councillor P Harris and Councillor J Lee

10 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2019

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In respect of Minute No. 5 – Gilstrap Charity and Charity of William Edward Knight – Trusteeship – the Director – Governance & Organisational Development apologised for being unable to bring a further report to this meeting of the Commission as she required a longer timeframe in which to bring a full and considered report. However, she did advise that progress was being made in respect of openness and transparency of meetings of the Trust with the agenda for the meeting to be held on 3 October 2019 being made available to all Members on the Extranet to address some Member concerns.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

12 GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE

The Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services circulated to the Commission copies of the final agreed Programme for the governance review which was to be held between Monday 14 October and Wednesday 16 October 2019. The Commission noted the timings of the session with all Members of the Commission and the open sessions to which all Members of the Council were invited.

Councillor R Blaney requested all groups to encourage Members to attend the relevant sessions and participate in the review process.

13 QUESTIONS AT FULL COUNCIL

Further to the last meeting of the Commission, the Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services presented a report which invited Members to consider proposed changes to Council Procedure Rules 14 and 15 – Questions by Members of the Council and Questions by the Public. The revised Procedure Rules, attached as an appendix to the report, had been written to reflect the comments made at the last meeting of the Commission.

The Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services referred to an email from Councillor P Harris in which he suggested that Rules 14 and 15 should be combined given there were little differences between them. However, the Commission considered that there were subtle differences between the two which did merit their separation.

The Commission proposed various minor changes to the draft Procedure Rules which were to be incorporated into the final report for consideration by the full Council. In addition, the Commission suggested that if revised, the new Rules should be reviewed in order to determine their effectiveness after a twelve month period. It was also considered that the procedure for asking questions at full Council should be detailed on the website.

AGREED that the proposed revisions to Council Procedure Rules 14 and 15 be recommended to full Council on 15 October 2019 for approval and adoption.

14 COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME

Further to the last meeting of the Commission, the Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services presented a report which proposed a new Council Petitions Scheme. The proposed scheme was attached as Appendix A to the report. The scheme addressed a number of issues within the current procedures such as specifying a deadline for receipt ahead of Council meetings, strengthening the requirements around who can sign petitions and refining the process for when petitions are presented to the Council for debate.

The Commission were invited to consider the threshold for the number of signatures required on a petition which would trigger a debate at full Council and also if they felt the reference to petitions calling for an officer to give evidence at a Council meeting were still relevant.

The Commission considered it was essential for the Council to have a scheme for dealing with petitions in place, even if the statutory requirement had now been removed. Following discussion, they agreed that it was still appropriate for local Ward members to be able to present petitions at meetings of the full Council, and they considered that an appropriate threshold for signatures to trigger a debate at full Council would be 1,000. In addition, they considered that it was appropriate to remove the reference to petitions calling for an officer to give evidence. One amendment to the proposed draft scheme was to add in the provision that the Council may find a more expedient way in which to deal with a petition which had met the threshold for requiring a debate at full Council.

AGREED that the proposed Petitions Scheme, as revised by the Commission be recommended to the full Council meeting to be held on 15 October 2019 for approval and adoption.

15 MEMBERS INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Director – Governance & Organisational Development presented a report which advised the Commission of the progress made in respect of convening a Members

Independent Remuneration Panel. The report detailed the remit, purpose and required composition for the statutory panel. It was noted that the Chairman on the Panel should have some knowledge of local government, the role of Councillors' and the relevant Members Allowances Regulations.

Officers had identified a retired senior local government officer and ex-District Council employee who would be suitably qualified to act as Chairman of the Panel, subject to availability and a willingness to participate. In addition, discussions had been held with the Council's two Independent Persons, Paul Cox and Sarah Britton, with a view to them filling the other two places on the Panel, and both had indicated their willingness to support the process. The Commission indicated their support for the proposed composition of the Panel.

The Commission discussed the timing for the Panel given the impending governance review and it was considered that commencement should be determined once the outcome of the first stage of the review was known in order to prevent any abortive work by the Panel. The Commission also considered an appropriate level of reimbursement for the Panel members. It was felt that up to a maximum of £2,000 would be appropriate for the Chairman with a lower rate payable to the two other members at a level to be determined by the Council.

AGREED that:

- (a) the progress made in respect of convening a Members Independent Remuneration Plan be noted; and
- (b) the full Council, at their meeting to be held on 15 October 2019, be recommended to:
 - (i) consider an appropriate fee level for the Panel members, with up to a maximum of £2,000 being suggested for the Chairman of the Panel; and
 - (ii) approve the membership of the Members Independent Remuneration Panel to enable it to be convened as appropriate.

16 COMMUNICATIONS WITH ELECTED MEMBERS

In the absence of the Chief Executive this item was deferred.

17 DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

AGREED that the next meeting of the Commission be arranged following the next Council meeting to be held on 15 October 2019.

Meeting closed at 4.31 pm.

Chairman