

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Constitution Committee**
held on Thursday, 23rd January, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Martin (Chairman)
Councillor D Marren (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors C Andrew, G Baxendale, P Groves, S Hogben, W Livesley,
A Moran, B Murphy, D Newton, G Wait and P Whiteley

Officers

Brian Reed, Head of Governance and Democratic Services
Suki Binjal, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

Councillors S Jones and R Menlove and H Davenport

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2013 be approved
as a correct record.

27 SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES: REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Committee considered the report of the Independent Remuneration
Panel on its review of Members' allowances.

The Chairman of the Panel, Mrs. Janet Rushbrooke, attended the meeting
and presented the report. She then responded to Members' questions
regarding the Panel's report and the process the Panel had adopted in
carrying out its review.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Mrs Rushbrooke for attending the meeting and addressing Members' questions.

RESOLVED

That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be noted and referred to Council for consideration, together with a summary of the questions asked by Members and answers provided by the Chairman of the Panel at the meeting.

28 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2014-15

The Committee considered the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2014-15.

Whilst the Constitution Committee would be undertaking further work to establish whether changes should be made to the scheduling of meetings and other matters relating to meeting arrangements, the proposed frequency of meetings had followed the practice previously adopted. Dates had been included for financial briefing/budget engagement events. August 2014 had been retained as a recess period except for planning meetings.

Those consulted over the production of the Calendar had included the Corporate Leadership Board, Cabinet, Committee Chairmen, Group Leaders and Group Whips.

RESOLVED

That the draft Calendar of Public Meetings for Cheshire East Council 2014-2015 be recommended to Council for approval.

29 VENUE FOR MEETINGS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

The Committee considered a report reviewing the arrangements for determining the venue for meetings of the Strategic Planning Board following consideration of the matter by the Constitution Member Working Group.

Council at its meeting on 11th October 2012 had approved the following recommendation of the Constitution Committee:

“That the Capesthorpe Room, Macclesfield Town Hall and the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Crewe be reserved in advance for every scheduled meeting of the Strategic Planning Board, with the room that is not required for a particular meeting being released at the appropriate time, the choice of venue to be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board in consultation with officers.”

Since then, the Committee had asked the Constitution Member Working Group to review the arrangements following concern expressed by some members about the choice of venue for a particular meeting of the Board. The Working Group had also been asked to undertake a more general review of the planning arrangements in Cheshire East to determine whether they were fit for purpose or whether alternative arrangements should be explored.

As set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report, the Working Group had concluded its review and had recommended the following revised arrangements:

“That the Capesthorne Room, Macclesfield Town Hall and the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Crewe be reserved in advance for every scheduled meeting of the Strategic Planning Board, with the room that is not required for a particular meeting being released at the appropriate time, the choice of venue to be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board in consultation with the Vice-Chairman of the Board and officers, provided that in exercising such discretion, the Chairman will have regard to the following considerations:

- § the number of planning matters which are to be considered at the meeting in question and the proximity of the development sites to the two meeting venues;
- § the scale of the proposed development associated with the applications to be dealt with at the meeting in question; the complexity of issues associated with, or the controversial nature of, the proposed development, and the likely consequential public interest;

and that, once the Chairman has chosen a venue for the meeting, the Chairman’s full reasons in support of that choice shall be summarised and communicated to all members of the Council via the notification email for the meeting.”

The Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board had been invited to the meeting but had been unable to attend. He had, however, submitted the following comments which were read out at the meeting:

“I am pleased to see your Working Group has recommended the choice of venue for SPB meetings is at the discretion of myself, in consultation with my vice chairman and officers. I feel this is the most acceptable solution.”

The Member Working Group was currently reviewing the terms of reference of the Strategic Planning Board and the Council’s wider planning arrangements and a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That

1. Council be recommended to approve that
 - a. the revised arrangements for determining the venue for meetings of the Strategic Planning Board as recommended by the Constitution Member Working Group and set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved; and
 - b. the Constitution be amended to incorporate the arrangements into the Committee Procedure Rules and to allow any consequential amendments.
2. the Committee note that the Constitution Member Working Group will report to a future meeting on the outcome of its review of the terms of reference of the Strategic Planning Board and the planning arrangements in general.

30 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered progress with its work programme as detailed in the report.

At the Committee's request, the Constitution Member Working Group had reviewed the terms of reference of the Civic Sub-Committee. The Group at its meeting on 25th November 2013 had resolved to advise the Committee that:

1. the existing terms of reference of the Civic Sub-Committee are considered fit for purpose and do not require amendment; and
2. the Civic Sub-Committee should be asked to review the Mayoralty Code of Practice.

RESOLVED

That

1. the current progress with the work programme be noted; and
2. the recommendations of the Constitution Member Working Group with regard to the Civic Sub-Committee be endorsed and accordingly the Civic Sub-Committee be asked to review the Mayoralty Code of Practice.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor A Martin (Chairman)