

Council
7 DECEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors: Christian Mitchell (Chairman), Roger Clarke (Vice-Chairman), John Bailey, Andrew Baldwin, Toni Bradnum, Karen Burgess, Peter Burgess, John Chidlow, Jonathan Chowen, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, David Coldwell, Leonard Crosbie, Ray Dawe, Brian Donnelly, Matthew French, Billy Greening, Tony Hogben, Gordon Lindsay, Tim Lloyd, Paul Marshall, Mike Morgan, Godfrey Newman, Brian O'Connell, Stuart Ritchie, Kate Rowbottom, Jim Sanson, David Skipp, Ben Staines, Simon Torn, Michael Willett and Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: John Blackall, Alan Britten, Roy Cornell, Christine Costin, Jonathan Dancer, David Jenkins, Nigel Jupp, Liz Kitchen, Adrian Lee, Josh Murphy, Connor Relleen and Claire Vickers

CO/46 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CO/47 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

CO/48 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman:

- Welcomed Councillor Billy Greening to his first full Council meeting following his election at the recent by-election for the ward of Southwater.
- Advised that the changes Council had made in April to improve governance arrangements had received national recognition for both the Council and its staff. The professional body for Lawyers in Local Government organised an annual event to acknowledge the very best in local government law and practice. After a national judging process in October, the Council's governance team was announced runner up to Wolverhampton City Council. The Council's approach to governance was commended as innovative, engaging and transparent and officers were commended for their professional advice and guidance. The Chairman offered his commendation to the governance team and all Members for helping to deliver better governance.

- Announced that it had been an honour to present Trevor Beadle, Head of Community and Culture, with the Public Service Award at the Community Awards, which had been held in The Capitol on 7th November 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture reminded Members that this year's pantomime at The Capitol, a production of 'Aladdin', would open on Friday 16th December 2016 and encouraged Members to support it.

CO/49 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions had been received.

CO/50 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER RULE 10.2**

No questions had been received.

CO/51 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET**

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets reported that the review of the Financial Strategy, as part of the budget setting process, enabled a balanced budget target to be established with a focus on an affordable level of Council Tax, delivery of the corporate priorities and policies of the Council and the continued enhancement of value for money and satisfaction with services for the residents of the District.

The 2016/17 budget was set in February 2016 and future deficits had been projected for 2017/18 through to 2019/20. Since then there had been a period of planning on a range of income generation ideas, continuing the business transformation journey to the next stage and other efficiency measures.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the projected budget gap be noted as detailed in the report submitted to Cabinet.
- (ii) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 be approved

CO/52 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28th November 2016 were received.

CO/53 **REVISED CONSTITUTION**

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Constitution Review Group created at Council on 27th April 2016 had concluded its review and was recommending a revised constitution for Horsham District Council, which was now submitted for approval.

The Chairman reported that the proposals for a shorter, easier to read constitution included the formation of a new Governance Committee, clarification of roles and decision making responsibilities and a more consistent document overall. He considered that this revised approach would enable Members and the public to better understand how the Council's governance arrangements worked.

The Chairman, Councillor Christian Mitchell, moved the adoption of the recommendations in the report and it was seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Roger Clarke.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the revised constitution for Horsham District Council, as submitted, be approved to take effect from 8th December 2016.
- (ii) That the Council's Personnel Committee be dissolved and all its functions transferred to the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive).
- (iii) That a Governance Committee be created comprising nine Councillors including the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one Cabinet Member.
- (iv) That the Governance Committee now undertakes the review of the effectiveness of the changes to governance arrangements agreed by the Council on 27th April 2016 after one year of operation (and not the Accounts, Audit and Governance Committee (now the Audit Committee) as previously agreed).
- (v) That it be noted that the Monitoring Officer will make any minor, typographical and presentational adjustments to the revised Constitution in consultation with the Chairman of the Council.

REASONS

- (i) To satisfy the requirement for the Council to keep its Constitution under review pursuant to section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).

- (ii) To satisfy the resolution of the Council on 27th April 2016, that a review be undertaken according to the terms of reference set out, and that recommendations be made to Council for consideration.

CO/54 **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HORSHAM: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chief Executive reported that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had informed the Council in April 2016 that it would be undertaking an electoral review of the District to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections. The Commission assessed electorate data for each local authority annually and conducted a review where significant electoral inequality was found. In 2016, 32% of the District's wards had a variance of greater than 10% with little prospect of the variance correcting itself through development or population movements.

On 21st July 2016, following Member briefings and two seminars, the Council agreed a submission to the LGBCE, proposing a Council size of 47 councillors from May 2019. On 27th September 2016 the LGBCE wrote to the Council advising that it was commencing its consultation on proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards and that it was minded to recommend that 47 district councillors should be elected to Horsham District Council in future. This consultation ended on 5th December 2016 but the Council had been given an extension to 8th December to allow the matter to be considered at this meeting.

In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards the LGBCE had to balance its three statutory criteria:

- To deliver electoral equality where each district councillor represented roughly the same number of electors as others across the district
- That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities
- That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government

With these criteria in mind, and following engagement with Members of the Council a proposed response to the consultation had been prepared and was submitted for approval. Electoral equality had been demonstrated in 20 of the 22 wards. However, in the proposed Broadbridge Heath and Forest Wards there would be variances that would exceed the LGBCE's criteria. The justification for exceptions to be made in these cases was set out in the report.

The Leader, Councillor Ray Dawe, moved the adoption of the recommendation in the report and it was seconded by Councillor Toni Bradnum.

It was proposed by Councillor David Skipp and seconded by Councillor Godfrey Newman that the draft submission to the LGBCE should be amended to:

- 1) reinstate a revised Horsham Park Ward of 3 Members by adding the northern part of polling district NP (currently proposed as part of the Holbrook West ward) with parts of polling districts NRA and NRB from the currently proposed Forest ward
- 2) reinstate a revised Forest Ward of one member with boundaries amended (as described in 1 above) to accommodate the revised Horsham Park Ward
- 3) propose a council size of 49 members in order to ensure electoral equality for the proposed warding pattern

Following debate the amendment was put and was declared **LOST**.

Having been moved and seconded the substantive motion was put. The motion was declared **CARRIED** and it was:

RESOLVED

That the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on warding arrangements for Horsham District Council from May 2019 be approved as submitted and that, in doing so, the LGBCE be asked to approve a Council size of 48 councillors (an increase in one from that originally proposed).

REASONS

To provide the Council's response to stage two of the electoral review process by proposing the warding arrangements that the council believes will be right for the authority from May 2019 to provide electoral equality whilst reflecting the interests and identities of local communities and providing for effective and convenient local government

CO/55 **INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES**

The Electoral Registration Officer (the Chief Executive) reported that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had published their final recommendations for changes to the West Sussex County Council division boundaries on 16th August 2016 and the draft Order had been laid before Parliament on 26th October 2016. These recommendations required Horsham District Council to conduct an interim review of some polling districts and polling places, which had been the subject of a four week consultation period.

The conclusions of the consultation were summarised in the report and the recommended changes to polling districts and places were submitted for approval.

The Leader, Councillor Ray Dawe, moved the adoption of the recommendation in the report and it was seconded by Councillor Toni Bradnum.

RESOLVED

That the changes to polling districts and places be approved as set out in the report.

REASON

To discharge the duty to review polling districts and places consequent to the recommendations for West Sussex County Council made by the LGBCE.

CO/56 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

The Director of Corporate Resources reported that, by 31st December 2017, the Council had to appoint new external auditors to audit its accounts from the 2018/19 financial year. The Council could do this on its own, with partners or through a national collective scheme. If the Council appointed its own auditors it would need to set up an audit panel with independent members to manage the scheme. Due to its value the appointment would require an EU procurement process. Since the Audit Commission had previously appointed the external auditors the Council had no officers with experience of procuring external audit services to carry out this work.

The Council had received an invitation to opt into the national collective scheme run by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited to appoint the external auditors and manage the contract. Council was recommended to accept this offer to avoid the procurement and ongoing costs of running such a scheme, to achieve economies of scale, to be able to gain the same auditors as Councils with whom it was in partnership and to avoid the procurement risk of purchasing an unfamiliar service, as a small purchaser in a market overcrowded with purchasers but with a limited number of suitable suppliers.

Councillor Godfrey Newman moved the adoption of the recommendation in the report and it was seconded by Councillor Stuart Ritchie.

RESOLVED

That the invitation to become an opted in authority be accepted and the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to enter into the scheme on behalf of the Council after being satisfied as to the terms and conditions.

REASONS

- (i) In order to secure a better price for external audit services through the utilisation of the purchasing power and expertise of Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.

- (ii) A local option would be time consuming and carry the risk of inexperienced officers with no experience of procuring external audit services being involved in the task.
- (iii) In order to achieve a lower cost of audit by having the same external auditors as our partner councils, who are also proposing to let their audit arrangements with Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.
- (iv) To avoid the costs and workload of setting up an independent audit panel to manage the appointment.

CO/57 **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES**

RESOLVED

- (i) That the following appointments be made to the vacancies on the respective committees and policy development advisory groups (PDAG):

Licensing Committee – Councillor Billy Greening
Standards Committee – Councillor Michael Willett
Community and Wellbeing PDAG – Councillor Billy Greening
Planning and Development PDAG – Councillor Karen Burgess
- (ii) That it be noted that Councillor Billy Greening is appointed to the Planning Committee (North) by virtue of being a Member for the relevant area.

CO/58 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

A report from the Council's representative on the South Downs National Park Authority, Councillor David Coldwell, had been circulated to all Members for information.

CO/59 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 6.52 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN