



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Democracy and Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Democracy and Standards Committee held at The Jeffery Room, The Guildhall, Northampton on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Suresh Patel (Chair)

Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Councillor Andrew Kilbride

Apologies for
Absence: Councillor Andrew Grant
 Councillor Daniel Cribbin
 Councillor Laura Stevenson

Officers Geoff Wild
 John Murphy
 Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
 Marina Watkins, Committee Officer

16. Declarations of Interest

None advised.

17. Minutes

Further to minute number 14 – the Local Government Boundary Review Task and Finish Group meetings will be set up commencing in January 2022.

All meetings commencing at 6pm to be held at the Guildhall, Northampton on the following dates:

19 January 2022, 16 February, 24 March, 27 April, 25 May and 23 June

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Democracy and Standards Committee held on 30th September be approved and signed as a correct record.

18. Chair's Announcements

None advised.

19. Review of Constitution

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer regarding the review of the Constitution.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the document had now been considered by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Cabinet, and would now be submitted to Council on 2nd December for consideration.

The Committee discussed a number of issues including the proposed finishing time of meetings of the Council. A 9.30pm end time was not considered to be sufficient to allow enough discussion at the meetings. Although it was appreciated that the meetings needed to be more focused, the public perception needed to be considered. Following a detailed discussion the Committee agreed on a 9.45pm finish time, with an option to be extended by 15 additional minutes.

It was suggested that the Constitution be amended to clarify that the maximum number of Motions excluded the Priority Opposition Motion for clarity. Councillor Jonathan Harris requested that the dissatisfaction of the Liberal Democrat Group with regards to Motions.

The Committee discussed the issue of Scrutiny Call-ins and the scenario where some issues could cover two or more directorates and committee remits. The Deputy Monitoring Officer suggested that the Councillors calling-in an item should request which Scrutiny Committee that they would like the matter to be considered by.

It was noted that there was currently no ordinary Council meeting between the December and April meetings, as the February meetings was dedicated to finance matters. The Chair suggested that an additional meeting could be discussed at the Annual meeting.

The committee stressed the need to acknowledge the feedback received from the public and other consultees and report back on progress, explaining why some matters could not be taken forward at this time. It was pointed out that the Constitution was a living document that will change regularly over time. The Chair agreed to include the feedback on the consultation as a future committee agenda item.

Councillor Eales considered that all Committee meetings should all commence at 6pm and only take place at other times where absolutely necessary.

The additional proposals comprised the following:

- i. Extend the finish time of full council meetings by 15 minutes (so that the finish time will be 9.45pm, with the option to extend until 10pm)
- ii. Extend the time for portfolio holder questions by 15 minutes (from 45 to 60 minutes)
- iii. Clarify that the Priority Opposition Motion should be put to the vote after a right of reply
- iv. Clarify that the maximum number of Motions on Notice should be five (excluding the Priority Opposition Motion)

- v. Clarify that questions at council meetings are restricted to members of the public
- vi. Clarify that call-in requests should specify which Overview & Scrutiny Committee should deal with the matter
- vii. Clarify that the requirement for members to rise should be only where they are able
- viii. All references to "impracticable" be replaced with "not possible", for clarity

The recommendations submitted in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

The Democracy and Standards Committee:

- a) Endorsed the additional proposed amendments to the Constitution made by officers;
- b) Made further proposals (as set out below);
- c) Recommended the revised draft Constitution to Full Council for approval.

20. **Urgent Business**

None advised.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____