



**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 Thursday 20 October 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present	Councillor Suresh Patel (Chair) Councillor Andrew Grant (Vice-Chair) Councillor Mike Warren Councillor Daniel Cribbin Councillor Danielle Stone Councillor Andrew Kilbride Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Substitute Members:	Councillor Sally Beardsworth (for Councillor Johnatahn Harris) Councillor Adam Brown (for Councillor Laura Stevenson)
Also Present:	Councillor Ian McCord Councillor Stephen Clarke
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor Jonathan Harris Councillor Laura Stevenson
Officers	Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer) Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager Colin Walker - Interim Assistant Director Planning (remote attendance) Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager Marina Watkins, Committee Officer

50. **Declarations of Interest**

None advised

51. **Minutes**

In response to a question from Councillor Beardsworth, the Director of Legal and Democratic advised that Standards for England considered that membership of a grand lodge should be declared.

With regards to Motions from predecessor Councils, political groups could re-submit Motions if accompanied by relevant information.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Democracy and Standards Committee held on 28th July 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

52. Chair's Announcements

None advised.

53. Updates to the Constitution

The Democratic Services Manager outlined the report detailing proposed amendments to the Constitution, which mostly related to the Planning Protocol and particularly the 'call-in' of applications.

Previously, a Councillor was expected to attend the planning meeting if they called in an application. Provision has now been made for situations where the Councillor is unable to attend – by appointing a substitute or having representations read out at the meeting. Councillors should not need to declare whether they were speaking for or against an application. The proposed changes were welcomed.

Discussion took place on whether the time limit imposed on registered speakers was sufficient at three minutes. It was noted that Strategic Planning Committee dealt with major applications and allowing 5-10 minutes per speaker might be more appropriate to put points across. It was agreed that the time limit for speakers be increased to 5 minutes with the position to be reviewed in 6 months.

The Interim Assistant Director of Planning advised that he could be contacted with views regarding planning committees and matters could be discussed informally.

Concerns were expressed regarding meetings of the Council which had very busy Agendas. Some felt there was limited opportunity for the public and opposition and that a review was needed.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that the report also covered changes regarding severance payments and contract procedure rules. The deadline for Motions and amendments had been moved by a day to allow time for consultation.

The recommendations submitted in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

The Democracy and Standards Committee:

- a) Noted and approves the updates to the Constitution as set out in Section 5; and
- b) Recommended the updates to Council for approval.
- c) Recommended that the time limit for speakers on Strategic Planning Committee be increased to 5 minutes, with the position to be reviewed in 6 months.

54. Boundary Review Task and Finish Group

The Chair thanked Officers, particularly Paul Hanson and Mark West for their work on the boundary review, and thanked Councillors for their contributions.

The Director of Legal and Democratic advised that the submission would be considered by Council on 3rd November, before being submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission on 7th November. Representations had been received from Councillors up until the meeting. The intention was to put forward a draft proposal with as much consensus as possible.

- The population figures had been provided by the Boundary Commission and had been calculated to provide for future development and growth
- Communities must be kept together
- Concerns that Daventry town had been split into two with the inclusion of some rural areas - It was noted that the Sustainable Urban Developments (SUEs) had necessitated this split. More work was needed in this area
- Currently the proposal indicated 43 Councillors in Northampton, 19 in Daventry and 15 in the South Northants area – there should be more in the rural areas
- Councillors were reminded that evidence was required to demonstrate why the wards proposed were put forward
- Information from parish councils was being collated directly by the Boundary Commission
- The Boundary Commission would not look at ward variances below 5% but would be very reluctant to allow a variance over 10%
- The final draft would be unlikely to satisfy all parties, but the final decision lay with the Boundary Commission, which is why it was beneficial to get as much consensus as possible.
- Large rural wards would be difficult to represent properly due to the distances involved
- An additional meeting of the Task Panel had been scheduled for Tuesday 25th October
- All comments and submissions would be reviewed and an amended proposal made available for the Task Panel meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Democracy and Standards Committee:

- a) Noted the work of the cross-party working group on the second phase of electoral arrangements for West Northamptonshire;
- b) Approved the document set out at Appendix A for submission to Full Council, subject to further amendments to be agreed, with a recommendation that it be approved for submission to the LGBCE; and
- c) Delegated authority to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chair of the Democracy and Standards Committee to make any amendments to the proposed submission to the LGBCE and to finalise the submission in light of any comments from this committee prior to submission to Full Council.

55. Member Development- Mandatory training and specific Training needs for the Democracy and Standards Committee

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager outlined the report.

The Committee considered that training on budget setting and treasury management would be beneficial.

No specific training was identified for the Democracy and Standards Committee.

The Director of Legal and Democratic advised that there could be difficulties with making too many training sessions mandatory. It was suggested that an effective tool may be to keep a register detailing members' attendance at training and highlighting non-attendance.

RESOLVED:

The Democracy and Standards Committee:

- a) Noted the Councillor development programme to date and proposed that training sessions be provided to all Councillors on budget setting and treasury management.
- b) reviewed and noted the current list of mandatory training for Councillors and considered the use of a register to note member attendance at mandatory training sessions

56. Review of Committee Work Programme 2022/23

Consideration was given to the Committee Work Programme.

It was suggested that consideration could be given at a future meeting to the formation of a training programme for new councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee Work Programme is noted.

57. Urgent Business

None advised

The meeting closed at 7.37 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____