

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Thursday, 20 August 2015 at 4pm

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Ambler, Bailey (substitute for Crisp), Crookes, Kennett, Radley JR

In attendance: Oliver, Parker, Radley JE

Independent Members: Peter Kern (Chairman), Mike Hirst

Parish Representatives: Alastair Clark

Officers Present: Daryl Phillips, Monitoring Officer
Gill Chapman, Committee Services

1 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor Ambler was elected Vice Chairman.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Radley pointed out that she had not attended the meeting and with this amendment the Minutes of the meeting of 18 March 2015 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Crisp, substituted by Councillor Bailey, John Keane and David Argent.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

6 HART DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION: PROPOSED PRACTICE NOTE FOR APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES, AND PROPOSED SCHEMES FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME, AND PETITIONS

Members considered a proposed Practice Note for appointment of substitute members of committees and sub-committees, and proposed Schemes for public question time and petitions, and the recommendation to Council of their adoption.

The Monitoring Officer introduced the item, confirming that in researching other authorities' schemes he had found no consistency. Schemes ranged from no questions, through 1 minute allowed and no supplementary, though to complete discretion of the Chairman as to whether and what type of questions were allowed. He referred to the emails that had been circulated and suggested some adjustments to the wording. In particular one substantial change to the existing 'Resign and Replace' arrangement, which had no arrangement to deal with the substitution of a Standards Member. He proposed the following wording to the proposed '**Appointment of Substitute Members of Committees and Sub-Committees**' at Appendix 1b.

"Standards Committee

Substitutes may be allowed for one meeting only and for parish representatives the substitute shall be drawn from a pool of two "reserve" parish representatives who shall have been nominated by the Hart District Association of Parish and Town Councils to the Annual Council meeting. A "reserve" Independent Member shall be appointed annually by the Council.

Members agreed to this amendment. After further discussion on notification of substitution it was agreed to add a note on good practice to ensure clarity for Members and Officers.

Members considered the Scheme for Public Questions in depth, with discussion centring around the time and content of questions without losing the public engagement element. The following points were agreed:

- Questions must not exceed 100 words (which would equate approximately to 2 minutes) and would be read and answered at the Council meeting.
- Supplementary questions must not exceed 1 minute
- The Constitution already allowed for 20 minutes of questions at the meeting, which could be extended at the Chairman's discretion
- If the Chairman considers that the business of the meeting must proceed before all the notified questions have been asked and answered, then questions would be answered in writing after the meeting (within 10 working days)
- More technical questions may require a written answer under an agreed timescale (eg 10 working days)
- Questions would be answered in rotation, eg one from the first questioner, then one from the second etc. This would require an adjustment to the Constitution (para 12.2)

- Those questions asked and answered at the meeting would be included in the Minutes, those not answered would be posted on the website with responses.

In considering the Petitions Scheme, Members agreed that point 5 should be adjusted in light of the earlier discussions, and that points 6 to 11 should stand.

It was agreed the Monitoring Officer would circulate updated Schemes to Members for their comments and agreement. The updated Schemes and Guidance would be appended to the Minutes as the recommendation to Council.

RECOMMENDATION to Council

- 1 To ADOPT the proposed as attached:
 - 1.1 Practice Note - Appointment of Substitute Members of Committees and Sub-Committees.
 - 1.2 Council's Scheme for Public Questions.
 - 1.3 Petitions Scheme.

- 2 That the Constitution be changed to reflect that questions be asked and answered in rotation, as attached.
NB Para 25.1 of the the Constitution states that 'Any motion to change the Constitution will, when proposed and seconded, be referred without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.'

The meeting closed at 1800