GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th AUGUST 2007

Councillors: Jeff Beck *(Chairman)* (P), Paul Bryant (P), Mike Johnston (AP), Irene Neill (P), Julian Swift-Hook (AP), Tony Vickers *(Vice Chairman)* (P) and Quentin Webb (P).

Substitutes: Owen Jeffery (P), Pamela Bale (P)

Also present: Councillors Jeff Brooks, Roger Hunneman, Royce Longton and Keith Woodhams

Officers present: Andy Day (Interim Head of Policy and Communication), David Holling (Head of Legal and Electoral Services) and Lee McQuade (Policy & Research Officer).

PART I

16. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Mike Johnston and Julian Swift Hook with Councillors Pamela Bale and Owen Jeffery substituting respectively.

17. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th June 2007 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillor Jeff Beck declared that he had been lobbied on Agenda Item 4.

Councillor Tony Vickers declared an interest in Agenda Item 4, but reported that, as his interest was personal and not prejudicial, he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

19. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION.

(Councillor Tony Vickers declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4 by virtue of the fact that he often asked questions at the Executive. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he was permitted to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Committee received a report on Proposed Changes to the Constitution (Agenda Item 4) from Andy Day, Interim Head of Service – Policy and Communication. He reported that:

- The report recommended changes to Paragraph 5.6.1 of the Executive Rules of Procedure – Member's Questions and Paragraphs 7.1.1, 7.3.4 and 7.3.5 – Referencing Up.

- The Leader of the Council had requested these changes be examined by the Committee and forwarded to the Council for approval.

Members did not consider that the proposal to limit each political group on the Council to five questions per agenda was fully in keeping with the underlying principles of accountability and democracy.

A Proposal to delete Paragraph 2.3 of the report was CARRIED.

Members questioned the rationale for moving Members Questions to the last item on Executive agendas prior to Part II matters. Officers informed them that this was in keeping with the Rules of Procedure for Council and Members of the Public did not necessarily have to sit through lengthy meetings. It was noted that the Chairman had the ability to vary the agenda if it was felt a question should be answered earlier.

A Proposal to delete Paragraph 2.2 was LOST.

In relation to referencing up, Members were concerned that the removal of the 'Referencing Up' provisions as set out in Paragraphs 7.1.1, 7.3.4 and 7.3.5 of the Council's Constitution would remove the 'safety net' by which Planning Committee decisions could be reviewed. It was noted that despite best intentions it was sometimes necessary to 'reference up' a decision, for example if a decision contradicted the Local Plan.

Members suggested that a comprehensive review of the planning committee structure was required which could include the 'referencing up' procedures and other matters.

A proposal to delegate the review of the planning committee structure and referencing up procedures to the Local Development Framework Working Group was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

1.   **That Council be requested to amend Rules of Procedure 5.6.1 in order to ensure that Member Questions are considered as the last item within the Part I session of Executive meetings.**

2.   **Paragraph 2.3 of the Report be deleted.**

3.   **The Local Development Framework Working Group be requested to undertake a comprehensive review of the planning committee structure including the 'referencing up' procedures.**

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 6.59pm)

CHAIRMAN   ....

Date of Signature: ....