

# **GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2010**

**Councillors Present:** Jeff Beck (Chairman), Paul Bryant, David Holtby, Tony Linden, Julian Swift-Hook (Vice-Chairman), Tony Vickers and Quentin Webb

**Also Present:** Andy Day (Head of Policy and Communication),

### **PART I**

#### **27. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 (Special) and 27 September 2010 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman subject to minor typographical errors being corrected.

#### **28. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Julian Swift Hook reported that he was Chairman of West Berkshire Mencap and was unsure whether any item on the agenda would impact on this position but if it did he would be declaring a personal interest

#### **29. Amendments to the Constitution - Scheme of Delegation (C1886)**

Andy Day introduced the report and advised that the changes proposed to the Scheme of Delegation were as a direct result of changes post the Senior Management Review and consequent upon the introduction of new legislation.

The Committee expressed some concern at the scale of the proposed changes but accepted that this was merely a tidying up exercise of the Scheme of Delegation.

**RESOLVED that** the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation be forwarded to Council for adoption.

#### **30. Stronger Leader and Cabinet Model - Outcomes of Consultation (C2003)**

Andy Day reported that at its meeting on 29 July 2010 Council agreed to undertake a consultation exercise in relation to the need for this Council to adopt one of two forms of governance, namely, the Strong Leader Model or the Elected Mayor model.

The Committee noted that the Mayoral option was not consulted on given that this had been discounted when the new Executive and Scrutiny system was introduced in 2001.

The Committee noted that the Council had received only a few responses the majority of which supported the adoption of the Strong Leader Model.

**RESOLVED that**, in accordance with the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Council be recommended to adopt the Strong Leader Model with effect from its Annual meeting in May 2011,

#### **31. Appointment of Designated Scrutiny Officer (C2164)**

Andy Day introduced the report and advised that Section 31 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, required this Council to designate one its officers as a Scrutiny Officer.

The Committee noted that it was proposed to appoint the Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager as the designated Scrutiny Officer.

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**RESOLVED** that Council be requested to designate the Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager as the Scrutiny Officer, in accordance with Section 31 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

### 32. **Arrangements for Working Group Considering Future Governance Arrangements (GAC2169)**

Andy Day reported that at its meeting on 23 September 2010 the Council considered two motions relating to the Council's governance structures. These motions followed comments from the Communities Minister suggesting that "Councils would be able to run themselves under a governance system that works best for their area".

As a result of this and the two motions the Council had agreed that a small Working Group should be established to look at alternative governance structures. It was proposed therefore that a small Group consisting of four Conservative and two Liberal Democrat Members should be established. It was also proposed that both Group Leaders be regarded as ex officio Members on this Group.

The proposed terms of reference for the Group were set out in paragraph 1.8 of the report. The Committee, having considered the proposed terms of reference, made a number of comments which resulted in the following being agreed:

1. To undertake a review of the current Executive and Scrutiny arrangements which should include the cost of the current arrangements together with how effective, efficient and inclusive the current system is perceived to be.
2. To consider alternative governance options including a committee based decision making structure to ensure that any new system is democratic, accountable, efficient and effective.
3. To examine the resources that will be required to effectively run any revised or current system.

Andy Day reported that despite the Minister's pledge the Council was not in a position at the current time to introduce any new governance arrangements until the existing legislation (Local Government Act 2000) had been amended or repealed.

The Committee agreed that rather than wait for the appropriate legislation to be amended or repealed that work could commence on (1) above. It was agreed that a questionnaire seeking views on the current governance arrangements should be designed and circulated to all Members to complete. This would help to inform the Group's work moving forward.

*(Councillors David Holtby and Tony Vickers left the meeting at 7.17pm)*

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the terms of reference for the Working Group, as set out above, be approved.
- (ii) That arrangements be made for a questionnaire to be circulated to all members seeking their views on the current governance arrangements.
- (iii) That each Group Leader be requested to nominate the appropriate number of Members for the Working Group.

*(The meeting commenced at 6:00pm and closed at 7:20pm)*

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**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....