

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 APRIL 2014

Councillors Present: Jeff Beck (Chairman), Paul Bryant, Tony Linden, Geoff Mayes, Julian Swift-Hook (Vice-Chairman) and Quentin Webb

Also Present: Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support) and Ian Priestley (Chief Internal Auditor),

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor Sheila Ellison

PART I

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2014 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

27. Internal Audit Plan 2014-17 (GA2842)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4) which outlined the programme of work for Internal Audit for the next three years. Ian Priestley in introducing the item explained that the plan was developed taking risk into account.

The Committee noted that the main areas of focus would be the 'Key Financial Systems' and anti fraud work. The plan was designed to provide the Council with assurance on the state of the Council's internal control framework and also to highlight and remedy any weaknesses identified in the Council's service delivery systems.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28. Request for the Revision of the Constitution (C2758)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) which requested an amendment to the Council's Rules of Procedure and Petitions Protocol. The Constitution currently allowed a debate at Full Council following receipt of a petition of 5,000 or more signatures. This report recommended that this should be reduced to 1,500 signatures which would be in line with many other local authorities.

This issue had come to light following a petition in respect of reductions to the opening hours at Pangbourne Library. The petitioners had been advised that because the library users came from more than two wards, the petition would need to have over 5,000 signatures in order to trigger a debate at Full Council. Because the numbers on the electoral roll in the wards concerned were relatively small this was unachievable. Had the petition limit been 1,500 signatures as proposed then this would have been more achievable.

It was felt that this amendment would enable the people of West Berkshire to bring to Full Council matters which were important to them and to hear Members debate these issues in a public meeting and would also encourage the engagement of the local population with politics.

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The Committee supported this proposal but considered that debates triggered by petitions should not apply to the annual Budget meeting. It was acknowledged that the time of this meeting had already been moved forward by 30 minutes to ensure that the business was conducted effectively and adding a potential further 30 minutes debating time to this meeting would be unhelpful.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Full Council be recommended to approve changes to the Council Rules of Procedure and Petitions Protocol to reduce the number of signatures from 5,000 to 1,500 in order to trigger a debate at full Council; and**
- 2. The Head of Legal be authorised to make appropriate amendments to the Council's Rules of Procedure and Petitions Protocol to reflect the change highlighted above.**

29. Changes to the Constitution - Part 13 Codes and Protocols (C2776)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 6) which set out proposed amendments to sections of Part 13 (Codes and Protocols) and in particular Appendices I (Councillor Call for Action Protocol), and J (Protocol for Council Representation on Outside Bodies) in light of legislative changes, policy changes and recent Government guidance.

Appendix I (Councillor Call for Action Protocol),

The following key changes had been made to the documents by Officers:

1. The correction of the job title of the Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee,
2. The correction of some typographical errors and an amendment to reflect the procedure in terms of making recommendations to other committees or boards.

Appendix J (Protocol for Council Representation on Outside Bodies)

1. The document had been aligned to the recently agreed Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members.
2. The sections pertaining to Members Interests had been updated to take cognisance of the new local Code of Conduct for Members.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the amendments as set out in the report be recommended to Full Council for approval;**
- 2. That, subject to being agreed by Full Council, the proposed amendments come into effect on the 16 May 2014.**

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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Date of Signature