

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2010

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

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Tony Linden

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor David Holtby

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

PART I

15. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2010 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of the following amendments:

Minute 10 - The word "and" on line two of paragraph 3 be amended to read "an".

Minute 12 – The word "Finance" on line 6 to be lower case.

In relation to Minute 10, Heads of Service Assurance Statements, the Committee was provided with the following written response from the Head of Education in relation to the query raised by Councillor Keith Lock (Risk Register Ref 4 Education Services - Page 116)

Response Provided:

The risk of staff leaving for other jobs prior to fixed term contracts ending [mainly planned for 31 March 2011] has now got caught up in the Council's strategy of making posts redundant in advance of fixed term contracts finishing, to contribute to redundancy costs. Most staff identified in this risk are now likely to leave the Council's employment on 31 Dec 2010.

Managers are managing this process with both staff and schools/clients, and it is not anticipated that many, if any, staff will leave before this new target date. School Improvement, one of the teams most affected, has already been working with schools to develop early 'buy-back' arrangements, so that we are able to retain a small core team of curriculum consultants to support raising standards.

As other budgets become squeezed however, due to further funding reductions, it is anticipated this risk will remain in the medium term.

16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

17. Amendment to the Constitution - Extraordinary Council Meetings (C2040)

The Committee considered a report which was submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group seeking an amendment to Paragraph 4.1.3 of the Council Rules of Procedure in relation to the calling of extraordinary meetings of Council.

The current Procedure Rule was drafted as follows:

“Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Chairman of Council, the Monitoring Officer or by any five Members of the Council if they have signed a requisition presented to the Chairman of Council and he/she has refused to call a meeting or has failed to call a meeting within seven clear working days of the presentation of the requisition”.

The Committee considered that the current wording of paragraph 4.1.3 was ambiguous and was open to different interpretation. It was considered that the aim of the Procedure Rule was to ensure that a Council meeting was convened as quickly as possible. It was therefore suggested that Procedure Rule 4.1.3 was amended to read as follows:

“Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Chairman of Council, the Monitoring Officer or by any five Members of the Council if they present a signed requisition to the Chairman of Council to call an extraordinary meeting. Such a meeting shall be called within five clear working days of the presentation of the requisition and be held within ten clear working days of the presentation of the requisition”.

RESOLVED: That Council be requested to consider amending Paragraph 4.1.3 of the Council Rules of Procedure as set out below.

“Extraordinary meetings may be convened by the Chairman of Council, the Monitoring Officer or by any five Members of the Council if they present a signed requisition to the Chairman of Council to call an extraordinary meeting. Such a meeting shall be called within five clear working days of the presentation of the requisition and be held within ten clear working days of the presentation of the requisition”.

(In accordance with the Council’s Procedure Rules Councillor Quentin Webb requested that his objection to the recommendation be recorded.)

18. Petitions - Revised Scheme for West Berkshire (C2030)

The Committee considered a report proposing the adoption of a formal Petition Scheme in accordance with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

The Committee expressed some concerns in relation to the draft Petition Scheme and considered that a further meeting was required in order to make the appropriate amendments to it, prior to requesting Council to adopt the Scheme. In addition to a number of comments in relation to grammar, the following were issues were also raised.

- Reference to Ward Members should be changed to Ward Councillors;
- The use of “he/she” should be consistently referenced in the Scheme;
- Paragraph 2 (c) iii to be amended to reflect the need for online petitions to include the name, address and postcode of each person supporting the petition;

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- Paragraph 3 (b) - Last sentence - Reference to “90 days” should read “90 calendar days”;
- Paragraph 3 (i) – Last line to be amended to read “submitted within the last 12 months”;
- Paragraphs 5 (a) and (c) - Reference to “working days” to read “clear working days”.
- Paragraph 8 (b) - This paragraph to be re-drafted to reflect the current position.
- Paragraph 14 - Reference to Committee to be amended to read “Commission”.

RESOLVED: That, a Working Group comprising Councillors Jeff Beck, Tony Vickers, Tony Linden and Quentin Webb, meet to agree revisions to the draft Petition Scheme prior to it being submitted to Council for formal adoption.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and closed at 6.45pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature