

<b>COUNCIL</b>	AGENDA ITEM 14(a)
<b>11 JULY 2012</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

**NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITTEES – CHAIRMEN AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES**

<b>R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S</b>
<b>FROM : Peterborough North Area Committee; Dogsthorpe, East and Park Neighbourhood Committee; and Central and North Neighbourhood Committee</b>
<p>That Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the request of the Peterborough North Area Committee, and the opinions of the Dogsthorpe, East and Park and Central and North Neighbourhood Committees;</li> <li>2. Delegates to the following neighbourhood committees: Peterborough North Area (N&amp;W2); Dogsthorpe East and Park (C&amp;E2); and Central and North (C&amp;E1); the authority to appoint their own Chair at the first meeting following Annual Council each year, and upon any vacancy arising;</li> <li>3. Agrees that the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) allocated to the chairmen of the Peterborough North Area (N&amp;W2), Dogsthorpe East and Park Neighbourhood (C&amp;E2) and Central and North Neighbourhood (C&amp;E1) Committees be withdrawn and the budget made available for those Neighbourhood Committees to spend in their areas; and</li> <li>4. Requests the Solicitor to the Council to amend the constitution accordingly.</li> </ol>

**1. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 This report is presented to Council following requests from the Peterborough North Area Committee on 12 June, the Dogsthorpe, East and Park Neighbourhood Committee on 14 June and the Central and North Neighbourhood Committee on 19 June to amend the way that the chairmen of the Neighbourhood Committees are appointed and to remove the Special Responsibility Allowances payable to them.

**2. BACKGROUND (AND CONSULTATION)**

2.1 Following adoption of recommendations made by the Strong and Supportive Scrutiny Committee task and finish group, the Neighbourhood Committee Procedure Rules in the Council's constitution state that the chairman for each area will be appointed by Council each Municipal year and shall be a Ward Councillor from the area from which that Committee is constituted. The Chairman for each Neighbourhood Committee will be appointed by Council each Municipal year. There will be one Chairman appointed for each of the seven Neighbourhood Committees (Part 4, Section 8 paragraph 11.1).

2.2 As part of the Scrutiny recommendations above, the special responsibility allowances agreed at Annual Council on 23 May 2012, states that £3,071.12 will be paid to each of the seven Neighbourhood Committee Chairmen (a total of £21,497.85). It should be noted that in accordance with the constitution, any councillor fulfilling more than one special role shall choose at the start of the municipal year which SRA to claim (Part 6, paragraph 2.2).

**2.3 Peterborough North Area Committee**

At its meeting on 12 June 2012 a majority of members present (five out of seven) of the Peterborough North Area Committee agreed with the motion put forward by Cllr John Fox that the

selection of a Conservative group chairman by full Council was undemocratic and did not reflect the political make-up of the area which has only three of the 11 councillors from the Conservative Group (four Liberal Democrats, three Peterborough Independent Forum, three Conservative and one Labour group councillor). In order to affect greater local decision making and local choice, as intended by the introduction of the Neighbourhood Committees, the local councillors should be able to elect the chairman for their local committee.

- 2.4 It was highlighted that the majority of local residents across the area had not voted for a majority of Conservative councillors to represent them and therefore the neighbourhood meeting, in order to reflect this preference, should not have a Conservative Group chairman imposed upon them by the city council but should be able to elect its own chairman.
- 2.5 When debating the special responsibility allowance paid to the Chairman, it was noted that the current chairman did not receive this. However, it was agreed by a majority of members (five out of seven), that the SRA should not be made available in the first place as it amounted to around £750 per meeting and the role should be taken on out of civic duty, not because of the availability of an additional allowance. It was agreed that the SRA should instead be included in the funding available for each Neighbourhood Committee to spend in its area. Members of the public that were present also raised their hands to support the views expressed at the meeting and that a report be submitted to Council requesting changes.
- 2.6 Dogsthorpe, East and Park Neighbourhood Committee  
At its meeting on 14 June 2012 a majority of members present (five out of seven) of the Dogsthorpe, East and Park Neighbourhood Committee agreed to express to Council its opinion that the selection of a Conservative group chairman by full Council was undemocratic and did not reflect the political make-up of the area (three Peterborough Independent Forum, three Labour and three Conservative group councillors). In order to affect greater local decision making and local choice, as intended by the introduction of the Neighbourhood Committees, the local councillors should be able to elect the chairman for the committee.
- 2.7 As two thirds of the local councillors were not Conservative Group councillors, it was claimed, at the meeting, that the chairman would not be able to command the support of all the councillors in the area and therefore a councillor should be able to be selected by the committee members in order to tackle issues affecting the neighbourhood area more effectively.
- 2.8 It was further stated that, in the committee's opinion, the Council should cease to pay councillors for chairing neighbourhood committees and this money should be redirected to project development within the wards.
- 2.9 Central and North Neighbourhood Committee  
At its meeting on 19 June 2012 a majority of members present (four out of five) of the Central and North Neighbourhood Committee agreed to express to Council its opinion that the selection of a Conservative group chairman by full Council was undemocratic and did not reflect the political make-up of the area (two Peterborough Independent Forum, two Labour and one Conservative group councillor). In order to affect greater local decision making and local choice, as intended by the introduction of the Neighbourhood Committees, the local councillors should be able to elect the chairman for the committee.
- 2.10 The local councillors in the two wards that make up the neighbourhood committee members were most knowledgeable about the issues affecting the area and were therefore the most suited to selecting a chairman of suitable experience to lead on tackling these issues. Full Council should therefore, not be involved in selecting the chairman.
- 2.11 It was further stated that the SRA for the chairman should be removed and given to the neighbourhood committee to spend in order to enhance its ability to fund and deliver projects within the area to benefit the local community.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 By agreeing to the recommendations the constitution would be amended to allow each committee named above to elect its own chairman from amongst its members.
- 3.2 The Special Responsibility Allowance allocation would be removed for each committee named above and the money would be used to increase the amount available for each committee to spend in its area by £3,071.12.

### **4. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

Peterborough City Council constitution.

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