



**MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ETHICS COMMITTEE
MEETING
HELD AT 6:00PM, ON
MONDAY, 4 JULY 2022
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, PETERBOROUGH**

Present: Councillors Sandford (Chair), Jamil (Vice-Chair), Allen, Fitzgerald, Sainsbury, Simons and Alison Jones

Officers in Attendance: Dan Kalley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Fiona McMillan, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Sue Proctor, Executive and Member Support Manager
Cecilie Booth, Corporate Director Resources and S151 Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. UPDATE BUDGET POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

The Constitution and Ethics Committee received a report in relation to an update to the Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

The Corporate Director Resources and S151 Officer introduced the report and stated that there were a few tweaks to the framework from the previous year, taking on board some of the issues. The key changes involved more training for members and workshops around the budget setting process. In addition the dates had moved forward to allow members the opportunity to set an alternative budget.

A summary of the changes were set out in appendix A. Members were informed that the Council were now working towards a three-year budget

setting process. A first draft of the Q1 MTFFS was currently being debated. The section in 4.3 had a number of typos and these would be corrected before being presented to Full Council.

The Constitution and Ethics Committee debated the report and in summary the key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Budget Council would be held no later than the 25 February in any given year. It was important to note that the end of February was practically the earliest the budget could be presented to Full Council, allowing for this to go through Scrutiny and Cabinet. This new process was designed to allow opposition members the opportunity to put forward ideas.
- It was difficult to define substantial amendments with regards to the budget. In previous years amendments had come through close to the meeting which prevented the finance officers working these up into proposals that were credible. This new timeline allowed for alternative budgets that were fully assessed and easier to manage.
- There was a lack of understanding from some members across the Council and further training would be welcomed. In addition, a glossary of terms would help some members understand some of the technical terms. Lack of understanding is a problem, glossary of terms some further training.
- The finance team were committed to working with opposition groups and resources within the team would be split between the executive and opposition members.
- It was important that officers worked with opposition members if they wished to create an alternative budget as soon as possible. This allowed well formulated budget proposals to be drawn up and presented to Full Council. Officers would look at the wording within section 4.3 to ensure that substantial amendments were defined clearly and differentiated from amendments that members could submit within the usual timeframes.

The Constitution and Ethics Committee considered and **RESOLVED** (unanimous) to approve the updated Budget Policy Framework Procedure Rules, as outlined in Appendix A and Recommend this to Council for approval.

5. UPDATE TO CIVIC PROTOCOL – HONOURS PANEL

The Constitution and Ethics Committee received a report in relation to updates to the Honours Panel.

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report and stated that the Civic Protocol had been updated since the last meeting except for the make-up of the Honours Panel. Members were therefore presented with the proposal of adding this to the Constitution and Ethics Committees terms of reference.

The Constitution and Ethics Committee debated the report and in summary the key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that it was right the Honours Panel formation and governance was part of the constitution.

The Constitution and Ethics Committee considered and **RESOLVED** (unanimous) to recommend to Full Council that the Constitution and Ethics Committee's terms of reference are amended to include responsibility for the Honours processes, with delegated responsibility for the administration of the processes to be carried out by Executive and Member Services.

6. GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Constitution and Ethics Committee received a report in relation to the Governance Review as detailed in the Improvement Plan agreed at Full Council in December 2021.

The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and stated that this report was being presented to committee as part of the commitment to consider undertaking a review of the governance arrangements at the Council. The report set out a number of options that the committee could recommend including re-visiting the review that was undertaken in 2016 in conjunction with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Members were informed that the Council currently operated a leader and cabinet model of governance. The report set out the advantages and disadvantages of the different options, including further information on the Wandsworth model of governance, which included a number of pre-decision scrutiny committees which enabled more Councillors to get involved with decision making across the authority. If options 2 or 3 were agreed a further report would be presented to the committee to enable the process to start the review.

The Constitution and Ethics Committee debated the report and in summary the key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Labour group had discussed the report in March and were broadly supportive of option 3 to enable a full review to be undertaken.
- The Liberal Democrat group had been in favour of introducing a committee system, similar to that operating in Cambridgeshire County Council, however the group were open to a hybrid system, similar to that at Wandsworth Borough Council in London, allowing for more Councillors to be involved in the decision-making process. The timetable in the report was well defined, although it was understandable that the timelines were dependent on the CfGS carrying out their review.

At this point Councillors Fitzgerald, Steve Allen, Simons and Sainsbury left the meeting. The meeting was therefore adjourned as the committee were no longer quorate.

6:00pm – 6.35pm
Chairman