

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 18 January 2024, 7.00 pm - 7.45 pm

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Members Present:	Councillors A Lion (Chairman), J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett and S Heap
Apologies:	Councillor(s) H Kauffman, J Philip and C C Pond
Officers In Attendance:	Nathalie Boateng (Service Manager / Solicitor - Legal Services (Shared Services)) and Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services)

8 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

9 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Vice-Chairman of the Group, Cllr J H Whitehouse, felt that no Supplementary Agenda for a meeting should be published after 5.00pm on the day before the meeting, and proposed that this be considered as an addition to the Constitution as part of the general review being undertaken.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the notes of the Working Group held on 28 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

Action:

- (1) That a formal deadline for the publication of a Supplementary Agenda of no later than 5.00pm on the day before the meeting be considered as an addition to the Constitution as part of the review.

10 TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Terms of Reference

The Working Group noted its Terms of Reference.

(b) Work Programme

N Boateng explained that for the comprehensive review of the Constitution, the Project Team had selected the most complicated section first, the Scheme of Delegations, and then they would work through the rest of the Constitution in order – starting with Article 1 and finishing with the Rules. It was suggested that the Financial Regulations section could be removed from the Constitution and made a separate document with a link in the Constitution to it. The Constitution would only contain those parts of the Financial Regulations which related to decision thresholds for Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and Council.

The Chairman, Cllr A Lion, suggested that the Work Programme for the Group should be broken down into phases or elements, and the Work Programme should be detailed for several years – not just one year at a time. The Group noted it was unlikely that a paper copy of the Constitution would be available at the Civic Offices for perusal, but this could be re-considered in the future.

The Group noted the PAS review of Planning Services taking place on 26 January 2024. It was highlighted that some of the current Planning Committees did not meet very often, and there perhaps needed to be a review of the Planning Committees. G Woodhall explained that there was likely to be a recommendation from the review regarding the future structure of the Council's Planning Committees. The Group requested a report at its next meeting on any relevant information that came out of the review.

The Work Group noted its Work Programme for the current municipal year.

Action:

- (2) G Woodhall and N Boateng to report back to the Group on any relevant information arising from the PAS review.

11 CONSTITUTION - REVISIONS & AMENDMENTS

G Woodhall outlined the revisions proposed for the next Constitutional update, which would be progressed in the next week. There had been a drafting error in the Scheme of Delegations for Member call-in of planning applications, and this needed correcting. Members had previously only been able to call-in an application if it was recommended for refusal, not approval. The Planning Service Manager would email all Councillors next week to inform them of the updated delegation and there would be an article in the Bulletin.

The Group noted the Constitutional update for January 2024.

12 CONSTITUTION REVIEW UPDATE

The Council's Monitoring Officer, N Boateng, presented a report summarising the progress made with the Constitution Review project, including the work undertaken on the Scheme of Delegations. The intention was to streamline the Scheme of Delegations section of the Constitution and make it easier to follow, rather than add or remove actual delegations. The accessibility of the Constitution, including its possible change from a PDF document to an HTML document, was now part of the Work Programme. The Group felt that it would be useful for the Corporate Communications Manager, T Carne, to attend the next meeting of the Group to discuss improved accessibility for the Constitution.

The Group noted the update provided by N Boateng.

Action:

- (3) That the Corporate Communications Team Manager, T Carne, be invited to the next meeting of the Group to discuss the options for improving the accessibility of the Constitution.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held on 14 March 2024 at 7.00pm.

CHAIRMAN