

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 27 February 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

Councillors: S H Beer
D A Hawkes
P D Jull
P Walker

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Democratic Services Officer

32 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S J Jones.

33 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members appointed.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

36 REVISED PETITION SCHEME

The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory Services) presented the report on the Revised Petition Scheme to the committee.

The current scheme, which dated from 2010 was based on now repealed statutory guidance. The proposed petition scheme sought to address lessons learned from the operation of the previous scheme and build upon best practice elsewhere. The key changes were:

- Introduction of minimum number of signatures
- Co-defining existing practice of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the gate keeper of petitions
- The removal of the requirement that petitions with 1600 or more automatically go to full Council
- Introduction of a minimum number of signatures (20), any fewer referred to Heads of Service to respond
- The new scheme clarified what would constitute an acceptable petition.

Members considered the report and raised the following points in their discussion:

- Whether a minimum age to sign a petition was necessary. Members considered a range of potential ages that could be suitable, which included ranges 10 – 16 years of age
- Whether the automatic referral of petitions of 1600 signatures or more should be retained. The counter argument to keeping it was that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be the appropriate body to debate a petition thoroughly and would then be best placed to decide whether the matter should be referred to full Council.

The following recommendation was made to the full Council:

RESOLVED: That the Governance Committee recommends to full Council that it approves the Revised Petition Scheme with the following suggested amendments

- (a) That, the minimum age requirement for signatories be 10 years old on the basis that this is the age of criminal responsibility.
- (b) That an additional paragraph be added after paragraph 2.13 that reads

“Any petition with 1600 or more signatures will automatically be referred to full Council after consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee”.

37 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION 2022/23

The Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) presented the Review of the Constitution 2022/23. Members’ attention was drawn to the following changes that formed part of the review:

- Amendments to the Scheme of Officer Delegations
- Incorporation of previously approved new Contract Standing Orders
- Incorporation of the previously approved Members’ Allowances Scheme
- Incorporation of the previously approved Parental Leave Scheme
- Additional minor administrative changes.

Additionally, it was stated that the Scheme of Officer Delegations would need to be amended to change references to the Head of Community and Digital Services to the Head of Transformation.

Members raised the following points:

- The need for a future review to consider changes to Area Committees and Forums to reflect current arrangements
- That a review of Article 10 be included in the next review.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Council

- (a) That the proposed changes in the review of the Constitution 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 (of the report), and

specifically those changes relating to Part 3, Responsibility for Functions, Section 1 (Responsibility for Local Choice Functions), Section 2 (Responsibility for Council Functions) and Section 6, Sub Section C (Scheme of Officer Delegations) that related to Council functions be approved and incorporated into the Council's Constitution, issue no. 25.

- (b) That references to the Head of Community and Digital Services be replaced with the Head of Transformation.

The meeting ended at 6.48 pm.