

1. Officer delegations

Responsibilities at director level for Streetscene and Planning/Building control have recently changed.

Recommendation:

The Constitution be updated to reflect changes in director/head of service responsibilities already agreed.

2. E-petitions

The Council is required to have an electronic petition facility in place for 15 December 2010. A paper scheme must be ready for 15 June 2010. Guidance on electronic petitions has been issued by the government. E-petition data standards are to be published by the government.

Recommended:

Article 3.01 a) – Citizens Rights - voting and petitions - be amended to reflect the new legal rights and to note where Council's scheme may be found, once made.

3. Terms of office of Standards Committee independent and parish councillor co-opted members.

Currently the Standards Committee terms of reference provide for independent and parish council members to normally be appointed for three years with a further extension of up to three years. Standards for England guidance suggests a maximum of two four year terms but leaves it to local discretion.

There have been many recent changes in the standards regime over the last three years including local investigation and assessment. The committee's current chair and most experienced parish council member are due to stand down, having served 6 years. It is considered it would be in the council's interest to ensure continuity at this stage and allow these, and other members to give up to eight years' service in future. [Note: in any case all membership will be subject to annual Council approval]

Recommended:

That Article 9 be amended to provide that independent and parish council members may serve for up to two terms of four years.

4. Appointment of chairmen and vice chairmen – Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Currently all the chairmen and vice chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny committees are appointed at annual Council, with the exception of the Housing Review Board, which currently elects its own chairman. The leadership of the Board at strategic level will be a critical and significant challenge in the forthcoming year. For example, new government proposals on the future of housing finance mean the chairman's workload and

responsibilities will increase. Executive Board relies heavily on the policy and advisory work carried out by the Housing Review Board. The Board has recently discussed future chairing arrangements and there was no overall agreement as to the best model.

The chairman will need to work with tenant/leaseholder representatives, community representatives and councillors towards a common understanding of options available, and outcomes which serve long-term community interests, rather than sectional interests. How well the Board performs over the next couple of years may impact on external assessment of its competence, which in turn may affect funding and choice available to the Council. This is not intended to undermine arrangements for tenant scrutiny which are in any case to be developed further. As a separate issue, the option remains to give the HRB the power to appoint its own vice-chairman if Council wished to do this.

Recommended:

Council appoint the chairman of the Housing Review Board at Annual Council, and consideration be given to the Board appointing its own vice chairman.

5. Update of Members' Planning Code of Good Practice

A new version is now available, taking into account the Code of Conduct changes introduced in 2007 and it is recommended the Constitution be updated. It is also recommended that any issues which affect officer planning applications, or which sit better within the Code of Conduct for employees, should be located within the officer Code for ease of reference.

Recommended:

The Members' Planning Code of Good Practice be updated with the revised version and the Code of Conduct for employees updated with the material relating to officer conduct.

6. Minor and/or consequential amendments

Minor and/or consequential amendments will be needed to the Constitution to implement the changes in this report, and to give effect to on-going changes in the legislative framework, and to ongoing changes, including councillor details.

Recommended:

The Chief Executive be given authority to amend the Constitution in line with this report and to keep it updated to reflect minor/ consequential amendments required by legislative change.

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