

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
13 November 2013 (7.30 - 8.50 pm)**

**Present:**

**COUNCILLORS**

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Conservative Group</b>          | Frederick Thompson (Chairman), Michael Armstrong, Robert Benham, Steven Kelly, Michael White, +Wendy Brice-Thompson and +Lesley Kelly |
| <b>Residents' Group</b>            | Clarence Barrett, Gillian Ford and Barbara Matthews   |
| <b>Labour Group</b>                | Keith Darvill   |
| <b>Independent Residents Group</b> | Jeffrey Tucker  |

**+ Substitute Members:** Councillors Wendy Brice-Thompson (for Becky Bennett) and Lesley Kelly (for Roger Ramsey)

Councillor Pam Light – Chairman of the Member Development Group – was also present.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Becky Bennett, and Roger Ramsey

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest

**15 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2013 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**16 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPION FOR CYCLING**

The Committee was invited to consider the proposal for the Council to appoint a Member Champion for cycling. The argument for this was that cycling had experienced a resurgence over the past few years and Havering had many miles of roads and a large, active, cycling population.

Members were reminded that the Mayor of London was an enthusiastic cyclist – and a champion for cycling in his own right – and

that by promoting cycling and cycling safety in Havering, it was highly probable that funding could be attracted into the borough.

After some discussion, Members formed the opinion that at this stage of the present Council's term, there was no necessity for a champion to be created, but that the responsibilities which would fall to a champion could be properly undertaken by the appropriate portfolio holder in Cabinet and the most appropriate Lead Member (apart from him being a keen cyclist) was Robert Benham.

A proposal was therefore put that the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment be given the responsibility for championing cyclists and cycling in the borough for the remainder of the current Council and that, if it was considered appropriate, at some future time, a further report should be submitted to the Committee with the role of a Member Champion more clearly defined after the local elections in May 2014.

In favour of the motion: Councillors: Frederick Thompson, Michael White, Steven Kelly, Robert Benham, Michael Armstrong, Wendy Brice-Thompson, Lesley Kelly, Clarence Barrett, Gillian Ford, Barbara Matthews and Keith Darvill

Against the motion: Councillor: Jeffrey Tucker

The motion was **CARRIED** by eleven votes to one.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment be given the responsibility for championing cyclists and cycling in the borough for the remainder of the current Council.
- 2 A further report should be submitted to the Committee with the role of a Member Champion for cycling more clearly defined after the local elections in May 2014.

## 17 **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY INDEPENDENT PERSON**

Members were reminded that at its last meeting, the Committee had requested further information on Redbridge's Independent Person (IP) Sarah Cooper James who was being proposed to act as deputy for Havering's IP Mr Keith Mitchell. This was a reciprocal arrangement and required both Councils to ratify the appointments.

At the Committee's meeting on 10 September, Members had expressed a desire to be better informed about the relevant experience and skills which such an appointee brought to the position. The purpose of the report (containing exempt information concerning Ms Cooper James's background) was now before the Committee.

Members noted the information provided to them and, on being assured that Ms Cooper James' allowance is funded by Redbridge,

The Committee **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council** that Sarah Cooper James be appointed as Deputy Independent Person for Havering.

## 18 **MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME 2014**

The Committee was informed that the Member Development Group had, at its meeting on 21 October 2013, agreed a programme of training for Members after the forthcoming local elections in May 2014.

Members were unanimous in their appreciation of the need for councillors – especially those who were serving on regulatory or quasi-judicial committees - to have the appropriate training and that if Members failed to ensure they had the requisite training, that omission could involve the Council in potentially costly legal actions, but the Committee was equally unanimous in its rejection of the term “mandatory” in the programme.

Members argued that elected Members could not be compelled to attend training – even though not to do so might be unwise – but it was the responsibility of the Member Development Group to persuade councillors to attend. It was also considered that there ought to be a distinction drawn between newly elected councillors (first-timers) who would have had no experience of council governance and those Members who had many years of experience across a wide range of committees and for whom “basic” training was inappropriate. Members argued that courses needed to be designed to suit both beginners and those with considerable experience to be meaningful and that no Member should be compelled to attend any course, but that every Member should be persuaded to attend those courses most beneficial to their personal and corporate development.

On the assurance by the Chairman of the Member Development Group that she would take the concerns of the Committee back to it and fully review the training programme, the Committee **NOTED** the report:

## 19 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Committee was invited to approve amendments to the constitution consequent upon the intention to reduce the number of straightforward, non-contentious planning applications which were considered by the Regulatory Services Committee, because they had been submitted by the Council as applicant, or for Council related

developments. Delegated authority – as in non-Council applications – would provide a speedier and more cost-effective means of processing those applications. It was considered that the current process was excessive and unnecessarily bureaucratic

Members sought confirmation that if such applications were challenged the usual default rules would apply and the matter be considered by the Regulatory Services Committee.

On receiving these assurances,

The Committee **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council** that the following category be added to the Constitution (Part 3.6.6) as set out below:

- (xv) To decide any application by the Council, or concerning Council land/ premises, involving buildings or structures/changes of use of no greater than 1000m<sup>2</sup> floor space where the proposal accords with development plan and/ or national planning policies and no third party objections have been received.

## 20 **CREATION OF A SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Committee was reminded that the Council together with the London Borough of Newham was proposing to run the back-office function of both Councils as a joint operation under the control of a Joint Committee. The implementation of this proposal would require the Council's Constitution to be amended to allow for such a joint venture to proceed (similar changes would have to be approved by Newham).

There was some degree of urgency because, in order to maximise the opportunity for both boroughs to benefit from mutually arranged reductions in expenditure from 1 April 2014, the Joint Committee would have to be created and ready to begin its work as soon as possible.

The first steps to setting up this Joint Committee would be that both Councils' Cabinets adopted the plan (which in Havering was 20 November and Newham, 21 November) with Havering's decision being ratified by full Council on the 27 November.

Members deliberated at length about the potential implications of the creation of such a body but acknowledged that delay would unnecessarily impact on the ability of both councils beginning to reap the benefits of reduced costs and consequent savings and would put both councils at risk in their attempts to ensure all necessary services were provided within budget.

The Committee was reminded that whatever decisions were taken in Cabinet and full Council, the Constitution itself needed to be amended to accommodate a joint body and that this was the sole purpose of the report.

Having deliberated the matter at length,

The Committee **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council** that:

1. It agrees to the formation of a joint committee with the London Borough of Newham to deliver various back-office functions for both Councils.

And that the amendments to the Constitution be approved as set out below

2. The following amendment to the constitution is made:

In section 2.8 Joint Working Delegations add:

(c) Shared Services Joint Committees

This is an executive committee of this Council and the London Borough of Newham with a membership of 3 councillors from the executive of each Council.

The committee's functions will be from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to control and co-ordinate the back-office functions of both Councils, in the case of Havering these will be:

- (a) Finance & Procurement
- (b) Exchequer Services
- (c) Asset Management
- (d) Legal Services
- (e) Democratic Services
- (f) Strategic HR and Organisational Development
- (g) Business Systems

These functions are set out in detail in Schedule 2 of the Joint Committee Agreement with the London Borough of Newham.

The Joint Committee will, prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 determine the senior management arrangements for the proposed shared service.

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**Chairman**