

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
13 January 2021 (7.30 - 8.35 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

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| Conservative Group | Robert Benham, Joshua Chapman, Roger Ramsey, Damian White (Vice-Chair), Viddy Persaud and Ciaran White (Chairman) |
| Residents' Group | Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone |
| Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group | Linda Hawthorn |
| Independent Residents Group | David Durant |
| Labour Group | Keith Darvill |
| North Havering Residents Group | Martin Goode |

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

7 PROTOCOL ON THE OPERATION OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

8 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

9 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 August 2020 were agreed and signed electronically by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the same.

10 APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2020/21

The Chair detailed the report requesting further appointments to Outside Bodies by the Committee.

The Governance Committee:

- **Agreed** that Councillor Chapman would be reappointed to the Romford Combined Charity; and
- **Agreed** That Ron Ower would be appointed to the Poyntz Charity

No voting was necessary.

11 **STAFF EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES**

Ben Plant, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development presented the report to Governance Committee.

The Committee took notice of the fact that the paper had been before the Committee before in January 2020 but the return had been delayed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Committee were now being asked to consider some amendments to the Staff Employment Procedure Rules as set out within the report.

The existing Rules were considered at Appendix A to the report and Appendix B set out the proposed new Rules for full consideration.

Previously the Governance Committee had asked for greater clarity and so the full implications had been set out in the body of the report.

Recommendation 2 and 3 in the report were stated as follows:

2. decide which Deputy Chief Officer posts should be appointed to by members and which, if any, should be appointed to by officers (four options are presented at **Appendix C**)
3. decide if the decision to take disciplinary action against or dismiss Deputy Chief Officers should be made by members or delegated to officers

And these were considered by the Committee and discussed.

Chief Officer Roles are those roles which are direct reports to the Chief Executive Officer and include all of the Senior Leadership Team. Deputy Chief Officers are those officers reporting to a Chief Officer. These are the roles that one would expect to be recruited to post by Members through the Appointments Sub-Committee. The decision for the Governance Committee was to determine which officers would be appointed by the Members and which by the Head of Paid Service (CEO). Further, the Committee were asked to give consideration as to who they believed the disciplinary function should lie with, Members or the Head of Paid Service.

There followed discussion and the Leader of the Council having regard to Appendix C of the report which set out all the options for the Committee suggested that an Option 1A be considered to allow Members to appoint all Deputy Chief Officers of Grade 11 and above. It was also indicated that disciplinary matters should be dealt with by the Head of Paid Service.

Further discussion followed and the CEO, Andrew Blake-Herbert gave an example of one of his direct reports who was graded below Grade 11 who would fall to be appointed by Members if the Grade 11 element was not agreed.

Councillor Roger Ramsey raised a query in relation to disciplinary matters. If the CEO as Head of Paid Service had dismissed an officer, would the appeal on that matter lie with Members? This would need to be very clear in the final version of the Rules so there was no ambiguity in that regard.

The Committee noted that often disciplinary matters would be delegated by the Head of Paid Service to the relevant service Chief Officer and on such an occasion the appeal would lie to the Head of Paid Service. If the Head of Paid Service had dismissed an officer then the appeal would lie to Members and that would be made clear in the final Staff Employment Procedure Rules for adoption.

The Governance Committee went to a vote to consider recommendation 2 as amended Option 1 now termed Option 1A (in Appendix 3 of the report).

All members voted in FAVOUR of this save Councillor David Durant who ABSTAINED from the vote.

Governance Committee:

Agreed Members would appoint all Deputy Chief Officers of Grade 11 and above.

The Governance Committee further considered recommendation 3.

All members voted in FAVOUR of this save Councillor David Durant who ABSTAINED from the vote.

Governance Committee:

Agreed the decision to take disciplinary action against or dismiss Deputy Chief Officers should be delegated to officers; and

Noted that the rules would clarify the provisions in relation to disciplinary appeals before recommended to full Council.

Following a vote where all members voted in favour save Councillor David Durant who ABSTAINED,

Governance Committee:

Agreed to recommend to Council that the proposed Rules as agreed above be approved and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Constitution and make all necessary consequential changes.

12 **TEMPORARY CHANGES TO POLLING STATIONS DUE TO COVID19 - GLA ELECTIONS 6TH MAY 2021**

Zena Smith, Manager of Election Services presented this paper to the Governance Committee for consideration.

This detailed the proposed temporary changes to the Polling Station arrangements planned for the GLA Mayoral elections presently scheduled for May 2021.

These temporary arrangements are either due to venues no longer being available in light of the Covid19 pandemic or to avoid further disruption to schools, where alternative venues are able to be secured

Temporary arrangements had been proposed for 21 Polling Stations which have hitherto been provided in Schools, but some had refused and on that basis some amendments had been made.

It had not been possible to secure an alternative to Hilledene School and so the School would continue to be the Polling Station due to the fact that no other alternative venue could be found. All efforts had been made to consider merging an existing station to avoid this but investigation showed this would not work due to lack of space.

The Governance Committee noted that these proposals were temporary for the GLA elections and that a full review of the Polling Stations would follow the outcome of the Boundary Commission Review.

Andrew Blake–Herbert, Chief Executive pointed out that many of Havering residents had used the same Polling Stations for years and would be entrenched in the practice of attending the same station. To ensure this temporary change proceeded in a seamless fashion the Communications Team together with Elections would ensure a very clear and extensive programme of communication for residents.

It was noted that the turn out for the GLA elections was usually around 40% and that it was likely that many residents would chose to use a postal vote to ensure the process was Covid secure.

In any event all plans were to be implemented to ensure social distancing and other arrangements to keep residents and staff protected from the virus. It was important to protect schools given the upheaval in education to date.

Councillor Durant was concerned that this was alarmism and that the democratic right to attend a Polling Station should be encouraged.

Following discussion, the Governance Committee voted with all Members in FAVOUR save Councillor David Durant who voted AGAINST and Councillor Ray Morgon who ABSTAINED.

Governance Committee:

AGREED

- To note the proposed changes set out in the report concerning the location of polling stations used for the GLA elections on 6th May 2021.
- To note a number of the proposed new venues are yet to confirm, in the event that any of these decline that the original venue be used.
- To note that the final list will be sent to all members prior to the election being held on 6th May 2021.

Chairman