

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
13 November 2024 (7.30 - 8.53 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Keith Prince, Joshua Chapman and Nisha Patel
Havering Residents' Group	Ray Morgon (Chairman), Stephanie Nunn, Barry Mugglestone and Reg Whitney
Labour Group	Keith Darvill and Mandy Anderson
East Havering Residents Group	Martin Goode
Residents' Association Independent Group	John Tyler

Unless otherwise stated, all decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gillian Ford.

8 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

9 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10 APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2024/25

A report asked the Committee to nominate a representative on the Romford Combined Charity following the conclusion of the term of office of the previous Member.

Councillor Viddy Persaud received six votes (Councillors Anderson, Chapman, Darvill, Goode, Patel and Tyler) and Councillor Paul McGeary received four votes (Councillors Morgon, Mugglestone, Nunn and Whitney).

It was **AGREED**:

That Councillor Viddy Persaud be nominated as the Council's representative on the Romford Combined Charity.

11 **POLLING DISTRICT AND POLING PLACE REVIEW**

A report summarised the outcomes of a feedback exercise among voters on their views of issues such as accessibility and parking at polling stations. A total of 18 responses had been received from voters following the election but there had also been a lot of feedback received from officers working on the election.

A school had previously been used as a polling station in Elm Park but this involved having to cross a main road to gain entry. Lighting and access issues were also factors at the school so it was proposed to move the polling station to Scargill Infant School.

It was also proposed to redraw the boundary in the UP2 district of Upminster to allow a group of 103 electors to use a polling station closer to where they lived. Ward Councillors in both areas had been consulted and supported the proposals. Details had also been included in the Calendar Brief publication.

Feedback on future consultations could be given to ward Councillors and information on the consultation undertaken was given in the report. Some Members felt however they had not been informed about this review. Information on the consultation had been placed in local libraries.

It was **AGREED**:

That the changes to the Polling Place for Polling District EL4 (Elm Park Ward) be endorsed.

That the redrawing of the boundary for Polling District UP2 (Upminster Ward) be endorsed.

That all other Polling districts and polling places remain unchanged.

That Full Council on 20th November be asked to approve the decision of the Governance Committee.

12 **CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - FURTHER CHANGES**

The Monitoring Officer reported he had reviewed the first 200 pages of the Constitution and had updated the Scheme of Delegation. Proposed changes and comments on these sections were included in the report.

The proposed changes detailed the statutory roles of the Directors of Public Health, Children's Services and Adult Social Services. It was also proposed to raise the threshold at which contracts were required to go to Cabinet from £1m to £2m. This was however subject to further discussion before finalising.

The surplus property protocol had been revised and shortened but some of the previously minuted actions needed clarifying prior to being taken to full Council. Members expressed support for the proposals that write-offs should be carried out by Cabinet and that there should be an independent member of Audit Committee. It was suggested that contract decisions of £1-2m should be made in consultation with the Director/Leader.

It was agreed that references to Council meetings should say that these are held 'in public' rather than being 'public meetings'. References should be changed from 'staff' to read 'officers' and section 2.01 should clarify that no by-elections can be held within six months of a scheduled election.

It was also recommended that the relevant section make it clear that changes to the Constitution required a two thirds majority at Council rather than a straight majority. The Monitoring Officer would confirm if the Chief Executive had a nominated deputy. It was noted that this could not be the s. 151 officer. A Member felt that Gold Command procedures should also be reviewed.

The Monitoring Officer would update on the timeframe for introducing Trade Union voting rights at Pensions Committee. It was noted that a Members' pension scheme was not allowed under the current law. Waivers to contract procedure rules did not usually sit with Cabinet and the proposal for these to need approval by both legal and finance officers could be considered by the Constitution Working Party. New procurement rules were also expected. Members felt however that Cabinet Members should retain some involvement.

It was noted that references to the former Adjudication and Review Committee should be removed from the Local Choice Functions section. The proposed section on consultations now included an ability to launch a consultation rather than just respond. This clarified the current position that officers could launch consultations. Examples of consultations could be included in the text. A requirement of officers to discuss consultations with the Lead Member could also be added.

The number of places per Committee could be added in a separate annexe to the Constitution. Only high level delegations were shown in the Constitution but sub-delegations could also be published. The Monitoring Officer would check if National Insurance contributions for Members could be stopped if the Member was no longer eligible to pay this.

It would also be clarified if the power to licence scrapyards sat with the Environment Agency rather than the Council. It was proposed that cases of

whistle blowing be moved from Governance Committee to Audit Committee as this reflected current practice. The 'reasonable fee' for a copy of the Constitution required defining and it was noted that the Director of Planning was not a statutory officer. It was clarified that the Mayor's casting vote was not being removed as this was already shown in the existing Council Procedure Rules.

It was AGREED that the Monitoring Officer would make the changes to the Constitution as agreed and then circulate the revised version to the Committee for comment.

Chairman