

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
12 February 2025 (7.30 - 8.50 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Keith Prince, Joshua Chapman and Dilip Patel
Havering Residents' Group	Ray Morgon (Chairman), Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Stephanie Nunn, Barry Mugglestone and Reg Whitney
Labour Group	Keith Darvill and Jane Keane
East Havering Residents Group	Martin Goode
Residents' Association Independent Group	John Tyler

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mandy Anderson (Jane Keane substituting) and Nisha Patel (Dilip Patel substituting).

14 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 PENSIONS COMMITTEE - STAFF MEMBER VOTING RIGHTS

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that the Trade Unions had asked for voting rights on the Pensions Committee but that the Committee had felt that a staff representative should be on the Committee but not necessarily be a member of a Trade Union. Rather, the position should be open to potentially wider staff representation.

The report detailed the principles by which the staff member could be selected. The terms of reference of the Pensions Committee could be amended in order that the staff representative did not have to declare an interest at each meeting. There had not been any problems reported from other Councils with this kind of representation. The logistics of voting for the staff representative would have to be worked out by the Monitoring Officer with the Council's communications section.

It was felt that the process should be more prescriptive but criteria in this area did vary between Councils. The only requirements that could be considered essential were attendance at meetings of Pensions Committee and undertaking the appropriate training.

It was suggested that former members of staff could also be eligible for the position but the consensus of the Committee was that the representative should be a serving member of staff.

It was **AGREED** unanimously that a staff representative, with voting rights, should be added to the Pensions Committee and that the representative should be a current member of staff.

The Constitution would be amended accordingly once the detail of election process, length of term etc had been confirmed by the Monitoring Officer. It was suggested that the representative could be given six months from election to complete the appropriate training.

It was **AGREED** that the Monitoring Officer would bring further detail of the election process and related issues for the staff representative to a future meeting of the Committee.

17 **CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION**

It was noted that the entry in section 8.1.3 should state Director of Starting Well and this would be amended. The table in this section would also be amended to read 'Havering post' rather than 'Council post'. It was also agreed that the relevant section number could be put in the header at the top of each page.

It was further agreed that a sub-note should be added in the section on Rights of Citizens (Article 3) that meetings were held in public rather than public meetings and hence there was no automatic right for members of the public to speak.

A Member suggested that the Mayor's opening remarks at Council meetings about Member behaviour should be revised, particularly as another Member had suggested including the Nolan Principles in agenda papers. The Committee Services Manager would take this forward. The suggestions of holding pre-Council prayers in another room and ceasing the playing of the National Anthem would be considered at the Constitution Working Party.

It was clarified that decisions worth less than £1m could be taken by officers, those of £1-2m value could be taken by Cabinet Members and those above £2m were taken by Cabinet as a whole.

The Committee endorsed the review the Monitoring Officer was undertaking around the governance of Mercury Land Holdings and other companies established by the Council. The Monitoring Officer emphasised that these companies remained subject to company law. Members of the Committee felt there should be more Member involvement in Mercury Land Holdings. The company did have public liability insurance but only for its core business and a Member suggested an item on Mercury Land Holdings could be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. Members were invited to send any issues regarding Mercury Land Holdings to the Leader or Monitoring Officer.

It was agreed that section 4.3 of Article 4 should make clear that the Mayor represented Havering as First Citizen unless the Deputy Lieutenant or Monarch was present. It would also be clarified that the Deputy Mayor had to be chosen to chair a Council meeting in the absence of the Mayor, this was not automatic.

It was suggested that the Nolan Principles should also be included in Article 9 re decision making.

Subject to the changes outlined above, the Committee **AGREED** that the sections of the Constitution be submitted to full Council for approval and adoption.

Chairman