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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
9 November 2011 (7.30 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Frederick Thompson (Chairman), Becky Bennett (Vice-Chair), Robert Benham, Steven Kelly, Michael White, Frederick Osborne, Garry Pain and Billy Taylor
Residents' Group	Clarence Barrett and Gillian Ford
Labour Group	Keith Darvill and Paul McGeary
Independent Residents Group	Jeffrey Tucker

There were no declarations of interest.

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

8 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9 PROPOSED NEW PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES - WHETHER COUNCIL TO COMMENT

The Boundary Commission for England had recently published proposals for new Parliamentary Constituencies for Havering, two of which would be wholly within the borough, with a third partly covering Havering and parts of eastern Barking & Dagenham. Members were asked to consider those proposals and their context and invited to comment on whether the Council should formally respond to them.

In discussion, Members expressed differing views as to whether the Council should provide a response to the Boundary Commission or not, during the course of which, opinions about the impact on the configuration of the constituencies and the impact the proposed changes were likely to have on various parts of the borough were expressed and reasons advanced for either accepting the proposals as presented or recommending changes to minimise the effect of boundary movement as far as possible, leaving the population in the most affected area under consideration within the historic Romford identity.

A proposal to accept the Boundary Commission recommendation that the wards in the south of the borough should be brought back to form a borough constituency and therefore maintain the historic alignment of the borough's borders was **LOST** by 3 votes to 10.

In favour: Councillors Clarence Barrett, Keith Darvill and Jeffrey Tucker,
Against: Councillors Frederick Thompson, Becky Bennett, Robert Benham, Steven Kelly, Fred Osborne, Garry Pain, Billy Taylor, Michael White, Gillian Ford and Paul McGeary.

There was an alternative proposal: that the Boundary Commission recommendations be challenged and that the Chadwell Heath Ward (Barking and Dagenham) should be joined to Brooklands and Mawney wards for the purpose of Parliamentary elections - on the grounds that this would affect the fewest number of residents and prevent a confusion of identity for residents on the west of the borough be put to the Commission. The proposal was **CARRIED** by 8 votes to 2.

In favour: Councillors Frederick Thompson, Becky Bennett, Robert Benham, Steven Kelly, Fred Osborne, Garry Pain, Billy Taylor, Michael White. Against: Councillors Keith Darvill and Jeffrey Tucker. Councillors Clarence Barrett, Gillian Ford and Paul McGeary abstained.

RESOLVED:

To RECOMMENED TO COUNCIL that:

The Boundary Commission for England be advised that, while the Council recognised the statutory requirement to balance electorates within the electoral quota, in its view the Commission was wrong to disregard both existing, strong local community ties and the fact that there had been significant change to constituency boundaries as recently as May 2010; and accordingly the Council urged that:

- (a) The Hornchurch & Upminster constituency should retain its existing boundaries, on the grounds that it has an existing electorate within the electoral quota;
- (b) The Romford Constituency should retain its existing boundaries within the borough and that the Chadwell Heath ward of the Borough of Barking & Dagenham should be added to it in order to achieve an electorate within the electoral quota, on the grounds that:
 - i. the Brooklands ward contains a significant proportion of the Romford Town Centre area and it would be wholly inappropriate for such a significant area to be within a constituency known only as "Dagenham North";

- ii. there are several major public facilities particularly associated with Romford in Brooklands Ward, such as The Queens Hospital and Romford Greyhound Stadium and it would be wholly inappropriate for such facilities to be within a "Dagenham North" constituency; and
 - iii. Chadwell Heath is considered part of Romford for Post Office purposes and, indeed, is often thought erroneously to be part of Havering; and
- (c) The Dagenham & Rainham Constituency should retain its existing boundaries, other than Chadwell Heath ward, and that further wards from Barking & Dagenham should be added to it (rather than Havering wards) in order to bring its electorate within the electoral quota.

10 **TRANSFORMATION OF SERVICE DELIVERY - MOVING TO ELECTRONIC DELIVERY OF COUNCIL, CABINET AND COMMITTEE AGENDAS AND REPORTS**

As part of the broader programme for transforming the delivery of services, Committee Administration had now begun using Committee Process Management software which had the potential to streamline decision-making through the electronic publication of Council, Cabinet and Committee agendas and reports rather than continuing to use mainly paper-based approaches.

This report provided Members with details of progress to date, indicated forthcoming improvements and sought approval of the strategy for future development.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1 Progress with the transformation of production arrangements for Council, Cabinet and Committee meeting documents be **noted**.
- 2 The general roll-out of tablet PCs to Members and officers be **endorsed**, subject to the cost thereof being met from existing budget provision and that a further report on the precise costs and savings be submitted in due course.
- 3 The Committee Administration & Member Support Manager explore with other services improved means of presenting information to Members, using electronic production of documents and the

projection facilities in the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms.

11 **PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - FURTHER REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS**

Members were reminded that current seating arrangements had been in place since 1997/8 and that there was a statutory right of access for members of the public for any matter other than those where confidential or exempt business was to be conducted.

Recently there had been several incidents during which business had been interrupted and Members felt exposed to personal risk. Proposals were now submitted to avoid the recurrence of such disturbances whilst ensuring that the public's statutory rights of access remained and also that no-one was unlawfully discriminated against.

A proposal that members of the public (especially the frail or disabled) be allowed into the Chamber was **LOST** 3 votes to 9.

In favour: Councillors Clarence Barrett, Keith Darvill and Paul McGeary. Against: Councillors Frederick Thompson, Becky Bennett, Robert Benham, Steven Kelly, Fred Osborne, Garry Pain, Billy Taylor, Michael White and Gillian Ford. Councillor Jeffrey Tucker abstained.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1 For Council and Cabinet meetings, with immediate effect:
 - a. The seating in the lobby at the rear of the Members' area and at the side area of the Chamber be reserved for Civic guests, press, officers and vulnerable people who have difficulties preventing use of the stairs to the balcony
 - b. Members' guests be seated in the gallery at the side of the Chamber rather than at the rear of the Members' area
 - c. Members of the public be seated in the balcony (or, if need be, an overspill room).

- 2 A further report be submitted to the Committee about seating arrangements at meetings of the Regulatory Services Committee to the next meeting.

12 **KEY DECISIONS**

Members were invited to consider revisions to the definition of what constituted “significant” when deciding whether or not an Executive Decision was a “Key” Decision.

If an Executive Decision was a Key Decision, certain administrative processes must then be followed which would otherwise not be needed and the intention had been to define what constituted a Key Decision in such a way as to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

Members expressed the opinion that the issue as to what constituted a “Key Decision” required further examination and in particular, they directed that a study be undertaken to provide them with an understanding about how this was treated in other boroughs.

The Committee agreed to defer the matter to allow further research to be undertaken about how Key Decisions were treated in other councils.

13 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Monitoring Officer submitted the following constitutional amendments to the Committee to amend the powers of the following:

Cabinet Members,
The Head of Regeneration, Policy and Planning,
The Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services and
The Head of Development and Building Control

RESOLVED:

To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the changes outlined in the Monitoring Officer’s report be accepted.

Chairman

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