



Special Advisory Group

Minutes – 24 April 2014

Attendance

Chair Cllr Andrew Johnson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Paul Sweet

Conservative

Cllr Neville Patten
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Liberal Democrat

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director, Delivery
Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services
Dereck Francis	Democratic Support Officer

Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Michael Heap

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. Title

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 2. Declarations of interests**
No declarations of interests were made.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting (3 March 2014)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 March 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4. Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

DECISION ITEM

5. **Review of the Constitution**

The Advisory Group considered a report on proposed changes to the Constitution.

During the ensuing discussion Cllr Neville Patten asked that the Mayor, when presiding over full Council meetings when petitions are debated, be requested to take note of the revised protocol for dealing with petitions.

Cllr John Reynolds also suggested that the lead or second lead petitioner be given a microphone in order that they can be heard in the public gallery.

Referring to Rule 17 in the Full Council procedure rules, Cllr Roger Lawrence reported that he was uncomfortable about full Council meetings moving into the private session. He asked that this be rigorously avoided whenever possible. He also asked whether the proposed changes to the appointment of Mayor as agreed at Leader's Business Management Group would be included in the proposed changes put forward to Standards Committee and Full Council. Keith Ireland undertook to check.

Regarding the protocol for the recording and filming of meetings, Cllr Peter O'Neill suggested that the protocol should include a clause on obtaining permission from a parent /responsible adult if the filming or recording is of a child.

Resolved:

That the Special Advisory Group supports the revisions to the Constitution for consideration by the Standards Committee and agreement by Council, specifically:

1. To revise the petitions protocol.
2. To amend the Council procedure rules.
3. To reissue the recording and filming of meetings protocol, to include provisions in relation to social media, and an appropriate paragraph to make clear that anyone filming or recording during a public meeting would need to obtain the consent of a parent/ responsible adult where it involves the filming or recording of children present at the meeting.
4. To delegate responsibility for approval of overseas trips by employees, where there are no costs to the Council, to strategic directors.
5. To move responsibility for most housing support services from Community directorate to Education and Enterprise.
6. To amend the delegations to the Audit Committee.
7. To remove references to shadow chairs.

8. To change the arrangements for hearing human resources appeals and to delegate authority to the Special Advisory Group to recommend to Cabinet the proposed specific detail on the new arrangements for the way in which human resources appeals would be considered.
9. The revised Planning code of conduct for Councillors and employees.

6. **Schedule of Councillor Meetings for 2014/15**

The Advisory Group considered a revised a schedule of councillor meetings for 2014/15 which had been revised following consultations with the three political groups.

In the light of the recommended change to the Constitution relating to human resources appeals (Minute No. 5 above refers), Cllr Roger Lawrence suggested that reference to the HR Appeals Panel be deleted from the schedule.

Martyn Sargeant added that with the truncation of the Casino Licencing process, the meeting of the Licensing Committee on 26 June was no longer required and would therefore be deleted from the schedule.

Resolved:

That the schedule of councillor meetings for 2014/15 be amended as now reported, circulated and submitted to Annual Council on 4 June 2014.

7. **Election Arrangements 2014 and Beyond**

Cllr Roger Lawrence outlined the salient points of the report on the practical arrangements for the 2014 local and European Parliamentary elections, and details of polling station reviews for 2015 and 2016. He reported that the polling station review for 2014 did not allow sufficient time for consultation but that the review for 2015 would commence earlier and individual ward councillors and the Special Advisory Group would be consulted.

On behalf of the Senior Management Team, Keith Ireland apologised to councillors for not affording them sufficient time to respond to the consultations on the review of polling districts and stations for 2014. He gave an assurance that the Advisory Group as well as individual ward councillors would be consulted as part of the reviews for 2015 and 2016.

During the ensuing discussion members of the Advisory Group welcomed the apology and reported on instances within their ward where polling stations had either been moved or withdrawn without agreement or consultation.

Referring to the number of polling staff employed at polling stations within his ward, Cllr John Reynolds suggested that consideration should be given to employing extra poll clerks for the peak periods rather than for the duration of the polling hours.

Cllr Andrew Johnson also requested that the full equalities analysis of the review of polling districts and stations be brought back to the Group

Resolved:

1. That the Advisory Group supports the polling station reviews for the 2015 and 2016 elections as detailed in the body of the report.
2. That the Special Advisory Group be consulted on each of the reviews as part of the consultation process.
3. That the terms of reference for the Special Advisory Group be amended to make explicit that the Group would be consulted as part of reviews of polling districts and polling stations.
4. That the Advisory Group note the logistical arrangements for the 2014 elections and the apology offered by Keith Ireland on behalf of the senior management team for the way the consultations on the review of polling districts and polling stations were undertaken.
5. That the full equalities analysis of the polling stations review for 2014 be presented to the Group.