

## Attendance

### Members of the Governance Committee

Cllr Alan Bolshaw (Chair)  
Cllr Ian Brookfield  
Cllr Craig Collingswood  
Cllr Celia Hibbert  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE  
Cllr Stephen Simkins  
Cllr Wendy Thompson  
Cllr Simon Bennett  
Cllr Paula Brookfield

### Employees

Laura Gittos	Business Improvement Manager
Fabrica Hastings	Democratic Services Assistant (Observing)
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager (Host)
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Stephanie Taylor	National Graduate Management Trainee
Kirsty Tuffin	Democratic Service Officer

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**  
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Milkinder Jaspal.
- 2 Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest made.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**  
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 February 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- 4 Matters arising**  
There were no matters arising.

5 **Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters**

David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on Governance Matters that provided an update on the work programme and other matters within the scope of the Governance Committee's remit, approved by Committee in January 2021.

The Committee were advised that provisions to hold remote meetings within the Coronavirus Act 2020, would expire on 7 May 2021. The roadmap out of lockdown to be used by Government would still see restrictions in place at that time which the Local Government Association and Government had been discussing. A declaration from the Courts could be sought to enable Government to change the law through secondary legislation. It was agreed that a further update on any changes in legislation and information on how meetings would be held safely if the legislation was not revised be considered at a future meeting.

It was agreed that an additional Governance Committee meeting be arranged to receive the revised constitution prior to Full Council approval.

Resolved:

1. That the update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters be noted.
2. That it be agreed that a further update on any changes in legislation and information on how meetings would be held safely if the legislation was not revised be considered at a future meeting.
3. That it be agreed that an additional meeting be arranged for April 2021.

6 **Calendar of Meetings 2021-2022**

Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the Council, presented the report on the Calendar of Meetings for the municipal year 2021-2022 that outlined the proposed timetable for Council and Committee meetings for the next Council Year.

Following questions on MS Forms, it was agreed that technological opportunities would be looked into for members to receive a notification that votes had been submitted.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that Governance Committee recommend to Council that the City of Wolverhampton Council Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 attached at appendix 1, be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the consultation with the political groups on the City of Wolverhampton Council Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 be approved.
3. That it be agreed that Delegation for any amendments to the City of Wolverhampton Council Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 be given to the Chair of Governance Committee in consultation with the Director of Governance following consultation with political groups.
4. That it be agreed that technological opportunities would be looked into for members to receive a notification that votes had been submitted.

7 **Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Review**

David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on the Council's Submission to Local Government Boundary Review that provided Committee with three options for phase 2, as outlined within the report.

The Committee were advised that the electoral review of Wolverhampton by the Local Government Boundary Review for England (LGBCE) began in July 2019 with the view for all out elections to take place in May 2022. The review began because 6 out of 20 of Wolverhampton's wards had an elector number variance of +/- 10% compared to the average ward elector population. The first part of the review saw LGBCE accept the Council's recommendation to maintain 60 Councillors/three Councillors per ward in April 2020. The second stage of the review had been public consultation on the ward boundaries. This was delayed from 12 May 2020, due to the covid-19 pandemic, and started on 19 January 2021. The consultation organised by LGBCE, would end on 29 March 2021 and the Council's deadline for submission of recommendation would be 2 April 2021. The three statutory criteria that the LGBCE require for submissions outlined were:

1. Electoral equality
2. Community interest
3. Effective electoral governance.

The Committee were advised that as agreed by Governance Committee, Labour Group and the Conservative Group had created independent proposals to submit to LGBCE, with the support from Officers who had worked with the groups to prepare proposals, as per appendix 1 and 2 to this report. The three options for how to progress with the response to the consultation outlined were as follows:

1. Option 1 - Wolverhampton does not submit a Local Authority submission. The Labour Group and Conservative Group submit their submissions independently.
2. Option 2 - The Committee votes for which proposal is put forward as the council's submission.
3. Option 3 - The two working groups' work together to prepare a joint Local Authority submission.

Councillor Ian Brookfield proposed that the Labour Groups proposal as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, be recommended to Council for submission. Councillor Stephen Simkins seconded the recommendation.

Councillor Wendy Thompson, Leader of the opposition, advised that the Conservative Group would be submitting their own proposal in response to the LGBCE consultation.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that Appendix 1 A, Labour Groups Proposal be recommended to Council for submission.

- 8 **Update on the 2021 Elections - Preparations for Covid Secure Elections**  
David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on the 2021 Elections that outlined the preparations being undertaken to ensure Covid Secure Elections can take place in May 2021.

The Committee were advised that the elections would take place on Thursday 6 May 2021, would be Local elections, Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral elections and by-elections (Heath Town and Tettenhall Wightwick). The Government had launched a delivery plan, followed by

supplementary guidance from the Electoral Commission to support electoral Officers to conduct safe and secure elections. Members were reassured that all the steps within Government guidance had been incorporated and included the following:

- Social distancing (inside and outside venues)
- Limited number of people inside polling stations
- Masks worn by staff and voters
- Voters bring their own pen or pencil
- Maximum ventilation
- Plastic screens (where appropriate)
- Hand sanitiser
- Regular cleaning

Another step to be incorporated into the elections would be the appointment of a covid marshal for each polling station to ensure all measures in place be adhered to. The Government would be changing the rules on proxy voting for those self-isolating to allow a proxy vote up to 5pm on polling day and increased capacity for postal voting would be added. Letters had been circulated to all households within Wolverhampton advising them of the voting options and the health and safety measures to be in place at polling stations. Every elector without a postal vote had also been sent a postal vote application form to widen their choice so that they feel comfortable with making their democratic choice. It was agreed that information on the number of people allowed in each polling station be brought to the next meeting.

The committee commended the electoral team for the work they had conducted to organise the elections to take place in May 2021.

Resolved:

1. That the update on the 2021 Elections - Preparations for Covid Secure Elections be noted.
2. That it be agreed that information on the number of people allowed in each polling station be considered at the next meeting.

## 9 **Governance Business Improvement**

Laura Gittos, Business Improvement Manager, provided a presentation on the Governance improvement programme that outlined the key changes made to governance within the Council.

The Committee were advised that the main areas for improvements had been focused on the following main areas:

- Forward planning and Modern.Gov
- The Constitution and decision making
- Civic support development
- Councillor enquiries
- Adobe e-sign.

Modern.Gov had launched a new app to improve functionality for users and this would be rolled out to all councillors by May 2021. A PowerBI dashboard would be rolled out for Directors, Services and Councillors to improve the councillor enquiries process and allow for easier follow up of enquiries received. A test pilot of the new

process would be conducted with a number of Councillors in April 2021 with a phased incorporation of the change to begin for all Councillors in May 2021. It was recommended that a section be added to the Councillor enquiries dashboard for Councillors to input ideas for development and improvement.

David Pattison, Director of Governance, advised the Committee that the constitution had been reviewed and remodelled to make it more user friendly, which included the use of illustrations.

Resolved:

1. That the update on Governance Business Improvement be noted.