

Governance and Ethics Committee

24 June 2021

Time 11.00 am **Public Meeting?** Yes **Type of meeting** Advisory group

Venue Council Chamber, 4th Floor, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square

Membership

Chair Cllr Tersaim Singh (Lab)
Vice Chair Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Con)

Labour

Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.
Cllr Claire Darke
Cllr Celia Hibbert
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE

Conservative

Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team:

Contact Donna Cope
Tel/Email 01902 554452 or Email: donna.cope@wolverhampton.gov.uk
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Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

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Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>
1	Apologies for absence
2	Declarations of interest
3	Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 6) [To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 April 2021 as a correct record].
4	Matters arising [To discuss any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting].
5	Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Update on implementation of Commission recommendations [To receive an update on implementation of Commission recommendations]

Attendance

Members of the Governance Committee

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

Employees

David Pattison	Director of Governance
Donna Cope	Democratic Services Officer
Fabrica Hastings	Democratic Services Assistant
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager (Host)

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Laura Phillips.

2 Declarations of interest

David Pattison, Director of Governance, advised that councillors were not required to declare an interest in the item Changes to the Constitution.

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4 **Matters arising**

David Pattison, Director of Governance, advised the Committee, that re the election as per agenda item 8 of the minutes from the previous meeting, that additional pens and face masks would be available should members of the public not bring their own.

David Pattison, Director of Governance, advised the Committee, as per agenda item 6 of the minutes from the previous meeting, that the MS Forms software was being worked on to ensure that the voting process was quicker and more seamless.

5 **Changes to the Constitution**

Councillor Simon Bennett joined the meeting.

David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on Changes to the Constitution for recommendation to Council. The Committee were advised that the proposed changes were to make the Constitution clearer and more concise so that the decision-making processes within the Council could be understood by all.

The proposed key changes, as detailed in section three of the report, were outlined to the Committee, and the Director of Governance responded to questions asked.

Concerns were raised regarding the proposed amalgamation of Governance and Standards Committees, and the level of standards currently in place. In response to this, the Director of Governance advised that the proposed changes to the Constitution, in particular to the Code of Conduct, would help address the concerns raised.

The Committee were advised that any further minor changes would be circulated to them in due course.

Councillor Paula Brookfield, Cabinet Member for Governance, moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Steve Simpkins seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

That Council be recommended to:

1. Approve the amendments to the Constitution as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to implement the changes.

That Governance Committee:

1. Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Governance in consultation with the Director of Governance to make any minor amendments to the proposals to change the constitution ahead of Council.

6 **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 work on the triple election taking place on 6 May 2021 continued and preparations were at an advanced stage. The focus was to ensure that the elections could take place safely and efficiently; with electors, candidates and agents being kept informed of all changed processes through regular briefings.

Councillor Paula Brookfield, Cabinet Member for Governance, praised all staff involved in the elections for their remarkable work and extensive planning during such a difficult time.

The Committee were advised that the provisions allowing remote meetings to take place for local authorities would end at midnight on 6 May 2021 and there was insufficient Parliamentary time to allow for an extension to be considered by Parliament.

A case had been heard on 21 April 2021 before the Courts seeking a declaration as to whether the existing law, set out in the Local Government Act 1972, allowed for remote meetings to take place without the need for a change to the primary legislation.

A determination had not been made on the day and as a result of this the council were preparing for both situations, namely for remote meetings to continue and for a full return to physical meetings post 6 May 2021.

The Director of Governance responded to questions asked and outlined the available options should the court case allowing for remote meetings be lost.

The Committee were advised that an update would be provided as soon as the outcome was known and that whatever approach was taken by the council it would be lawful and safe.

Councillor Paula Brookfield, Cabinet Member for Governance, moved the recommendations within the report. Councillor Milkinder Jaspal seconded the recommendations.

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.

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