

Attendance

Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee

Cllr John Reynolds (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.
Cllr Celia Hibbert
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Employees

David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
Laura Gittos	Head of Governance
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Donna Cope	Democratic Services Officer
Jacob Stokes	Democratic Services Assistant

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Apologies for absence
There were no apologies for absence received. |
| 2 | Declarations of interest
There were no declarations of interest. |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 March 2022 be approved as a correct record. |
| 4 | Matters arising
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. |

5 **Update from Monitoring Officer**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the proposed Governance and Ethics Committee Work Programme for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

It was noted that a number of additional items would be considered during the upcoming year, including Information Governance, and the Chief Operating Officer welcomed further item suggestions from Members.

In response to comments made regarding the delay in the publication of Individual Executive Decision Notices, the Chief Operating Officer acknowledged that the delays were entirely unacceptable. He stated that reference had been made to the issue in the Annual Governance Statement for the council and that lots of work had been done with officers to ensure it never happened again. He further stated that an internal audit had been arranged to investigate the matter which would go before the Audit and Risk Committee.

Following further discussion on the matter, it was agreed that the internal audit report should also be presented at Governance and Ethics Committee.

Resolved:

1. That the update from the Monitoring Officer be noted.
2. That the internal audit report on Individual Executive Decision Notices be considered at a future Governance and Ethics Committee.

6 **Conferring the Title of Honorary Alderman**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report: Conferring the Title of Honorary Alderman. The report recommended that the title of Honorary Alderman be conferred upon former Councillor Keith Inston.

It was noted that the Constitution would be amended so that Alderman reports would be taken directly to Council for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That Council be recommended to convene an extraordinary meeting on the 20 July 2022 to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Keith Inston.

7 **Changes to the Constitution**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report: Changes to the Constitution. The report detailed the proposed amendments to the constitution to ensure continuing lawfulness and effectiveness.

The Chief Operating Officer provided an overview of the proposed changes and explained the rationale for these changes as detailed in section three of the report.

Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Committee.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked and agreed to provide Councillor Bennett with further details of the Local Authorities that were used in the benchmarking exercise.

The Chief Operating Officer welcomed further comments regarding the consideration of petitions and noted that the introduction of Public Questions at full council would be looked into further.

It was noted that a protocol on how questions by members of the public would be dealt with would be presented at the next Governance and Ethics Committee.

Resolved:

1. That Council be recommended to approve the amendments to the Constitution as detailed in the report and authorise the Monitoring Officer to implement the changes.
2. That the Chief Operating Officer would provide Councillor Bennett with details of the Local Authorities used in the benchmarking exercise and the wording they used in their Constitutions.
3. That it be noted, that the Protocol on Dealing with Questions by Members of the Public be presented at the next Governance and Ethics Committee.

8

Schedule of Petitions Scheme

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Schedule of Petitions Scheme. The report detailed the actions taken in relation to all petitions received by the Council during the last municipal year.

It was noted that although the legal requirement for local authorities to have a statutory petitions scheme had been removed, the City of Wolverhampton Council had continued to do so.

The Chief Operating Officer outlined the Council's current scheme and proposed that the Governance and Ethics Committee received a regular report presenting the latest data. This would ensure that the Committee were informed of actions taken in relation to all petitions received by the Council and enable them to suggest changes to the current scheme.

Jaswinder Kaur, Democratic Services Manager, noted that the current Petitions Scheme had been approved by Council in November 2021, and none of the thresholds had been amended at that time as comparative data had shown that our thresholds were a lot lower than other authorities.

The Democratic Services Manager presented the petition scheme data from 2021–2022, as per appendix 1 of the report. She responded to questions asked and agreed to add further guidance on the website regarding petitions for planning and licensing matters.

Resolved:

1. That the actions taken in relation to all petitions received by the Council during the last year be noted.
2. That further guidance be added to the website regarding petitions for planning and licensing matters.

9 **Evaluation of May 2022 Elections**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Evaluation of May 2022 Elections. The report outlined the good practice and areas for improvement identified at the May 2022 local elections and gave an update on the scheduled communications and key dates for the 2022 Annual Canvass.

Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendations.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, highlighted the key findings and outlined the proposed changes for next year's all out elections.

The report was considered by Committee and the Electoral Services Manager responded to questions asked. It was agreed that the verification and count should remain at Aldersley Leisure Village and members supported the Returning Officer's recommendation that the count next year should take place the following day allowing more time to undertake the complex method of counting for all out elections.

Members of the Committee congratulated the Elections Team and thanked them for their hard work.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked and discussed the proposals for next year's elections.

Resolved:

1. That feedback on the May 2022 local elections be provided.
2. That the timetable for the 2022 Annual Canvass be noted.
3. That the Returning Officer's recommendation that the count next year should take place the following day to allow more time to undertake the complex method of counting for all out elections be supported.

10 **Polling District and Polling Place Review**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Polling District and Polling Place Review. The report outlined the approach and timeline to carrying out the polling district and polling place review, which was the next step towards implementing the new ward boundaries.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, outlined the report and noted that as the new ward boundaries for Wolverhampton did not align with the current parliamentary constituencies, a further Polling District and Polling Place Review would be required when the new parliamentary constituencies were agreed.

The Electoral Services Manager summarised the consultation proposal and noted that all ward councillors would be invited to attend drop-in sessions allowing them to contribute to the development of the final polling district and place scheme.

It was further noted that on 1 December 2022, the revised electoral register would be published on the new wards, and existing members of the Council would only be entitled to the parts of the register that they were currently elected members for.

The report was considered by Committee, and Councillor Reynolds suggested that the number of drop-in sessions for Councillors be reduced and preferably not held in August.

Officers responded to questions asked and the Chief Operating Officer agreed to consider the suggestions from Councillor Reynolds.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed approach and timetable for the polling district and polling place review be approved.
2. That it be noted that the proposed scheme at this stage was intended as a starting point for discussion to aid the consultation.
3. That it be noted that the revised timetable for the scheme had been amended slightly since the report taken on 25 February to account for the new municipal year calendar of meetings.

11 **Provision of Fairtrade drinks within City Assets**

Resolved:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting.

12 **Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report: Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints. The report outlined the need for, and work undertaken to commit to writing the Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints.

It was noted that the resolution within the report stated that Council had to approve the proposed arrangements, but subject to the Chair's authority, the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the arrangements could be approved by the Governance and Ethics Committee.

Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendations as detailed by Chief Operating Officer. Councillor Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendations.

The report was considered by Committee and the Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked.

In terms of personal protection, Councillor John Reynolds requested that the Chief Operating Officer's personal name be removed from the document.

Resolved:

1. That the arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, and its annexures, which included Hearing Procedures, be approved.
2. That the Chief Operating Officer be authorised to publicise the document and add it to the Constitution as necessary.

13 **Corporate Code of Governance**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report: Corporate Code of Governance. The report outlined the improvements made to the Code of Corporate Governance and the reasons for the improvements. The Code was updated following a recommendation from the Council's Annual Governance Statement in 2021, and it

was recommended that the Council agreed to the addition of the document to the Constitution to ensure continuing lawfulness and effectiveness.

The report was considered by Committee.

The Chief Operating Officer responded to questions asked and it was agreed that the current diagram within the draft Code would be replaced.

Resolved:

1. That it be noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would consider the revised Code of Corporate Governance.
2. That the current diagram within the draft Code of Corporate Governance be replaced.
3. That Council be recommended to approve the revised Code of Corporate Governance and authorise the Chief Operating Officer to publicise the document and add it to the Constitution.