

CIVIC AFFAIRS

21 November 2012

6.00 - 7.11 pm

Present: Councillors Boyce (Chair), Rosenstiel (Vice-Chair), Marchant-Daisley, Benstead and Brierley

Officers Present

Chief Executive – Antoinette Jackson
Director of Resources – David Horspool
Head of Corporate Strategy – Andrew Limb
Head of Legal Services – Simon Pugh
Democratic Services Manager – Gary Clift
Electoral Services Manager – Vicky Breeding
Support Services Manager – Karl Tattam
Committee Manager – Martin Whelan

Also Present

Leader of the Council

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

12/51/civ Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Herbert and Councillor Pitt.

Councillor Brierley attended as an alternate member for Councillor Pitt.

12/52/civ Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

12/53/civ Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12/54/civ Public Questions

There were no public questions.

12/55/civ Local Government Pension Scheme - Employers Discretions

The committee received a report presented by the Support Services Manager regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme – Employers Discretion.

The Support Services Manager tabled a summary of the changes.

Resolved (Unanimously)

- i. To approve the proposed policy statement on employer discretions as per appendix A of the committee report.
- ii. To authorise the Head of Human Resources and Director of Resources to determine decisions relating to the merits of individual cases.
- iii. That Council officers will continue to review the statement every 3 years and/or in line with changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) as advised by the Local Government Pensions Committee (LGPC) and the Administering Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council), and any recommended changes will go before Civic Affairs for approval.

12/56/civ The Localism Act and the Committee System

The committee received a report on the Localism Act and the Committee System, presented by the Democratic Services Manager.

The committee made the following comments on the report

- i. The content was interesting, but lacked sufficient analysis of the implications (positive and negative) of reverting to a committee system.
- ii. It was noted that Brighton and Hove Council had only retained the committee system until relatively recently due to a loophole in the legislation relating to elected mayors. It was also highlighted that the

executive model didn't work well in councils where the administration had a small or a non-existent majority.

- iii. The benefits highlighted by the London Borough of Sutton as result of their transition to a committee system were questioned. It was suggested that many of the highlighted benefits were already been delivered through the Area Committee system in Cambridge.
- iv. It was noted that all the councils that had transferred to date to the committee system were large authorities.
- v. The advantages of previous City Board, which had operated from 1973 through to 2002, were highlighted. It was explained the City Board provided political overview of all forms of decision-making including regulatory.
- vi. Disappointment was expressed that the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 had not been repealed and therefore precluded a reversion to the previous form of executive arrangements.
- vii. Clarification was requested whether the principle of a policy framework could be retained if the Council reverted to a committee system. The Head of Legal Services agreed to check the details, but explained that logically the principle of a policy framework would be removed, but that there was nothing precluding something similar being built into the committee delegations. It was agreed that officers would check the details and report back to members of the committee.
- viii. It was highlighted that Kent County Council had also recently adopted a hybrid system, which was similar to the model already operating in the city.
- ix. It was agreed that the City Council wasn't typical of other Councils, and that there were many opportunities for all Councillors to actively participate in the development and influencing of the details of policy.
- x. With the possibility of there being a close political balance for the foreseeable future, it was suggested that the governance arrangements should be kept under review but at this stage no change was required.

- xi. The possibility of confusion on the part of the public was also highlighted, if it wasn't clear where decisions were being taken.
- xii. Members were reminded that in the event of the Council resolving to amend its governance arrangements significantly, no further change would be permitted for five years without recourse to a referendum.

Resolved (Unanimously) to agree that no further work is required on adopting a different arrangement for scrutiny and decision making for the reasons set out in the committee report.

12/57/civ Committee dates - 2013/14

The committee received a report from the Committee Manager regarding the committee dates for 2013/14.

The committee requested

- i. Further discussion on the North Area Committee dates. It was agreed to do this at the next North Area Committee.
- ii. The production of a draft calendar for 2014/15 for consideration at a future meeting.
- iii. The circulation of the confirmed dates to Councillors as soon as practical.

Resolved (Unanimously) to approve the committee dates for 2013/14.

12/58/civ Members Allowances 2013/14

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Members Allowances Scheme for 2013/14.

The committee made the following comments on the report.

- i. It was agreed that references to obsolete technology and associated peripherals such as fax and fax rolls should be deleted from the scheme.

- ii. It was agreed that the provisions to withhold allowances partially or fully were no longer valid as it formed part of the former standards regime, so should be deleted.
- iii. Clarification was requested on the basis for calculating the basic allowance, and whether this was based on the principle of the living wage. It was also suggested that the current level of allowances could put off potential councillors from standing for election. The concern was acknowledged, but it was agreed that the existing allowances were at a low level, and without external intervention such as a national allowances scheme, it would be difficult for the council to make significant changes.
- iv. Officers agreed to investigate why travel warrants for members were encouraged rather than reclaiming the cost via expenses.

Resolved (Nem Com) to recommend to the Council:

- i. That the current Members Allowances Scheme subject to the small amendments in i. and .ii above and be continued for the 2013/14 municipal year.

12/59/civ A review of the Annual Canvass and Publication of Register of Electors

The committee received an update on the review of the Annual Canvass and Publication of Register of Electors.

It was acknowledged that the circumstances were unique, however it was suggested that similar issues could arise with the introduction of individual voter registration.

The committee thanked the officers involved in the organisation of the canvass and the publication of the register of electors.

12/60/civ Feedback on the Police and Crime Commissioner Election held on 15th November

The Returning Officer presented an oral report regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner election held on 15th November.

The committee were advised

- Turnout in the city had been 14.7%, which had compared with East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council (Lowest – 12.9%) and Peterborough City Council (17.4%).
- Turnout at city polling stations had varied between 5.7% and 15.45%, with 46.31% of postal votes returned.
- The ballot papers were verified before midnight at the Guildhall.
- The count had been undertaken at Soham, with no overall winner after the first round. The count had taken 6 hours with a 15% turn out. Concerns regarding the capacity for managing similar counts with potentially larger turnouts were raised.
- It was noted that one complaint had been received regarding a Presiding Officer, but that the majority of complaints were beyond the control of the Returning Officer such as lack of information regarding the process and candidates.
- It was explained that a member of staff from the Electoral Commission had attended the verification and count, and had raised no issues. It was agreed that if the Electoral Commission produced a report or supplied feedback, that this would be circulated to members of Civic Affairs Committee.
- The Returning Officer thanked the Elections Team for their hard work before and during the election.

The committee made the following comments on the report

- i. Concerns were raised that the count was operating as 6 individual counts, with potentially inconsistent approaches. The possibility of greater use of existing technology to reduce the cost of future counts was suggested.
- ii. The 2nd stage count excluded the majority of the 2nd preference votes, as they didn't relate to candidates who had progressed to the 2nd stage.

- iii. Concerns were raised about the turnout implications for 2016, as not all districts currently had scheduled elections.
- iv. Clarification was requested on whether the count could have continued overnight and been completed by the morning.

The Returning Officer clarified the following points

- The centralised count had been the decision of the Police Area Returning Officer.
- The size of the other districts would make it very difficult to have an overnight count, particularly as the 2nd stage couldn't begin until all districts had declared.

It was also suggested that the spaces left blank at the top and bottom of the papers should be restricted to minimise the risk of "write in" candidates.

The meeting ended at 7.11 pm

CHAIR