

CIVIC AFFAIRS

2 February 2011
6.00 - 6.55 pm

Present: Councillors Boyce (Chair), Rosenstiel (Vice-Chair), Benstead, McGovern and Ward.

Officers Present:

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson
Director of Resources: David Horspool
Head of Internal Audit: Steve Crabtree
Democratic Services Manager: Gary Clift
Committee Manager: Glenn Burgess

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

11/1/civ Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Pitt and Councillor Herbert. Councillor McGovern attended as the Liberal Democrat Group alternate.

11/2/civ Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11/3/civ Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2010 were approved and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

11/4/civ Public Questions

Mr Taylor addressed the committee regarding the publishing of decision notices. He felt that issuing timely decision notices would increase the openness and transparency of the City Council.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the minutes and decision notices were issued as soon as possible after the meeting. The Committee Services section had a target of 95% of all minutes being published onto the Council's website within 10 working days of the meeting. Taking into account the internal processes required to ensure accuracy, it was felt that this was a realistic target. It was also noted that members of the public and the press were able to contact the Committee Services section directly after meetings in order to obtain verbal clarification of any decisions taken.

The Democratic Services Manager thanked Mr Taylor for his comments.

Mr Taylor addressed the committee regarding the Councils Filming Protocol and the report of the Independent Complaints Investigator (ICI).

He felt that the Filming Protocol would deter members of the public from engaging with the democratic process, and highlighted Oxford Council as a good example of a local authority that actively encouraged filming of its meeting.

It was also noted that meetings of The Executive had been omitted from the Filming Protocol, and that the requirement for the applicant to retain original footage for an indefinite period seemed unreasonable. The Chief Executive confirmed that reference to meetings of The Executive had been omitted by mistake, and that the Filming Protocol would be amended.

Mr Taylor then challenged the claim within the ICI Report that he had been 'sensationalist' in his reporting of the North Area Committee of 30 September 2010. He urged the committee to reject the recommendations within the officer's report.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the complaint had been thoroughly investigated and had informed the suggested changes to the Filming Protocol. In the absence of the Independent Complaints Investigator, it would be inappropriate to discuss her report in detail.

11/5/civ Shared Audit Arrangements

The committee received a report from the Director of Resources and the Head of Internal Audit regarding the proposal for a shared Internal Audit service between Cambridge City Council and Peterborough City Council.

Councillor Rosenstiel asked whether the abolition of the Audit Commission would lead to a sharing of external audit functions. The Head of Internal Audit confirmed that discussions with partner organisations were already taking place regarding possible joint procurement of these services.

It was also noted that officers would be investigating further development opportunities within the wider market. It was hoped that this could lead to the marketing of the Council's audit services to external customers such as the NHS and local voluntary organisations.

The Chair welcomed the new Head of Internal Audit and acknowledged the excellent work undertaken by the previous post holder and the Director of Resources.

Resolved (Unanimously) to:

Note the arrangements put in place for the delivery of shared Audit services between Cambridge City Council and Peterborough City Council.

11/6/civ The Council's Filming Protocol

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Council's Filming Protocol.

Councillor Ward and Councillor McGovern highlighted the difficult balance between being open and transparent, and providing a safe environment for potentially vulnerable members of the public to engage with the democratic process. Members agreed that individual committee Chairs were in the best position to judge this.

Councillor Benstead questioned the term 'recording' within the Protocol and members agreed that 'audio and visual recording' would provide more clarity. Councillor Benstead also highlighted the need to investigate a more cost effective way for the Council to film its own meetings.

Members discussed the requirement within the Protocol for any recordings to be kept indefinitely. It was agreed that this was impractical and that a fixed 4 month period would be sufficient.

Members discussed the value of producing full audio recordings of meetings. For meetings of a potentially controversial nature, such as Planning and Licensing, it was felt that this could be beneficial. The Chief Executive and the Democratic Services Manager agreed that there could be scope to investigate further in the future.

Resolved (Unanimously) to

- (i) retain the right of any individual to record meetings.
- (ii) amend the Protocol as set out in appendix 2 of the officer's report, and include the following *additional* amendments:
 - inclusion of 'The Executive' in the list of Council meetings able to be filmed/recorded.
 - any reference to 'recording' to be replaced with the term 'audio and visual recording'.
 - to note that original audio/visual recordings need only be retained for a period of 4 months.
- (iii) agree the approach to Area Committees as set out in 6.3 of the officer's report.
- (iv) agree to review the Protocol in March 2012; and recommend the Protocol as amended to Council.

11/7/civ Chief Officer Performance Review (COPR) Working Group

The Chair ruled that under section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, this item be considered despite not being made publicly available for five clear working days prior to the meeting. The reason that this could not be deferred was that the Working Group was due to meet prior to the next meeting of this committee.

The Chair confirmed that the COPR Working Party was due to meet on 4 February 2011 for the first time this municipal year, and again on 16 February 2011.

The minutes of the Civic Affairs Committee on 27 May 2010 referred to its appointment for the year and the members appointed as:

Councillors Boyce, Bick, Herbert, Reid, Smart and Ward.

In the process of organising the meetings last month, it became clear that the intention had always been for 4 Liberal Democrat members plus an alternate (Councillor Ward). This was in keeping with a 4 Liberal Democrat members to 2 Labour members split which had been in operation in recent years. Councillor Walker would act as Councillor Herbert's alternate, and there was therefore one vacant space to be filled.

It was therefore agreed that the Working Party would be:

Councillors Boyce, Bick, Herbert, Reid, Smart.
(Alternates: Councillors Ward and Walker)

Councillors Boyce and Herbert have suggested that the committee look to reduce the number of councillors on this working party in the future and the time of day it meets. It was agreed that this would be dealt with during the preparations for the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2011.

Resolved (Unanimously) to

Note for the record the clarification of the membership of the COPR Working Party for 2010/11.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

CHAIR

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