

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Services Committee held on 17 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Jane Potheary (Vice-Chair), Mark Coxshall, Shane Hebb, Luke Spillman, Abbie Akinbohun (Substitute) (substitute for Bukky Okunade) and Barry Johnson (Substitute) (substitute for Robert Gledhill)

Apologies: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair) and Bukky Okunade

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter (Chief Executive)
Jackie Hinchliffe (Director of HR, OD & Transformation)
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the General Services Committee held on the 7 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Review of Constitution and Process

Councillor Hebb introduced the report on behalf of the Leader. The report considered the current processes in place for the recruitment and appointment of Directors and Assistant Directors and other elements of the constitution, recommending changes to current arrangements to improve transparency and democratic engagement whilst maintaining the integrity of the role and responsibilities of the Head of Paid Service. Councillor Hebb briefed Members on each of the recommendations and confirmed that those agreed which impacted on the constitution would be presented to Full Council.

Members discussed the recruitment of a Political Assistant with Councillor Spillman stated this post appeared to be extravagant and the money could be better spent on frontline services. Councillor Coxshall commented the post was invaluable to ensure policy advice be given to Members that could not be

provided by Officers. Councillor Potheary stated that further information would be required on this post and opinions should be canvassed amongst Members. Councillor Hebb stated the post would be a good resource to Members which would enable policy information and support to be provided.

Councillor Potheary stated she was heartened the report had come to General Services Committee which was a positive way forward to ensure the involvement and engagement of all Members.

Councillor Potheary questioned whether the Review of Scrutiny being undertaken by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee would feed into these constitution changes. The Chief Executive stated the report was being undertaken as part of public scrutiny and engagement which would not affect the decisions being made this evening. Councillor Potheary agreed that both items should be considered separately.

Councillor Spillman welcomed the changes in the report but questioned whether time should be shortened on portfolio holder presentations which would allow more time for questions.

Members agreed that recommendation 1.2.3 should be deferred to enable further discussions to take place at Governance Group and then at General Services Committee.

Members agreed to vote en-bloc on recommendations 1.1 to 1.2.2.

RESOLVED that:

1.1 General Services Committee recommend to Full Council the following amendments to the constitution:

1.1.1 The appointment of all Directors and Assistant Directors on a permanent, interim or acting up basis, be carried out by the General Services Committee;

1.1.2 The appointment of all permanent Directors and Assistant Directors then be ratified at a meeting of the Full Council;

1.1.3 All formal non-minor (1) restructure, permanent or temporary, that impacts on the line management or breadth of responsibility of any Director or Assistant Director, and (2) any role title change to Director or Assistant Director, be notified to members of the General Services Committee for early engagement;

1.1.4 Formal recognition of the Shadow Cabinet from the largest opposition group – including the right to ask the first three questions of the Portfolio Holders on their annual reports;

1.1.5 Amend the time allocated for the presentation of the Portfolio Holders' annual reports to Council to twenty minutes with a limit

of seven minutes in total to cover both the introduction and summing up by the Portfolio Holder;

- 1.1.6 Amend the Constitution regarding the delegation to the Leader in approving acquisitions and disposals up to a value of £500,000 to a limit of £200,000 with all other approvals to be considered by the Cabinet;**
- 1.2 The Chief Executive brings forward reviews of the following:**
 - 1.2.1 The S106 process with the aim of increasing both Democratic oversight and community involvement;**
 - 1.2.2 Purdah guidance to determine whether there can be any greater flexibility in preserving Member led activities and council related meetings;**
 - 1.2.3 Members agreed to defer the recommendation for a process for the recruitment of a Political Assistant for any group that has six or more Members to enable further discussions to take place.**

The meeting finished at 7.32 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk