

COUNCIL CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Council Constitution Committee held on Monday, 10 November, 2008 at 5.45 p.m. p.m. at the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors M.B. Hosken, (Chairman), R.K. Austin, A.J. Eade, G.M. Green, W.L. Tomlinson, V. Tonks and D.R.W. White

CCC-05 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Council Constitution Committee held on 29th September, 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman,

CCC-06 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J.M. Seymour

CCC-07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CCC-08 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

The report of the Head of Audit & Democracy proposed changes to the Council's Constitution in respect of Article 6 (Overview & Scrutiny Commissions) and Part 4, Section 5 (Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules) in order to reflect the proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny function.

The proposals sought to change the structure of the scrutiny function in order to shift its focus from Council Portfolios to the seven community priorities by ceasing to operate the current Scrutiny Commissions and replacing them with a Scrutiny Leadership Board and a Scrutiny Assembly. The Scrutiny Leadership Board would be made up of six elected Members (three Conservatives, two Labour and one from the three smaller groups to provide political balance) and would provide strategic leadership and co-ordination of scrutiny activity. The Lead Scrutiny Members would be expected to lead scrutiny activity for one each of the Community Priorities, to develop closer working relationships with the respective Cabinet Members and would usually chair Scrutiny Reviews. The Scrutiny Leadership Board would take collective responsibility for scrutinising the overarching Community Priority of Transforming Telford & Wrekin and would hear Call-Ins and Councillor Calls for Action.

Whilst the four existing Scrutiny Commissions would be disbanded, the four existing sub-groups, i.e. the Corporate Parenting, Campus Telford & Wrekin, the Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group and the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee would continue. The former would be renamed the Health Scrutiny Monitoring Group and would include within its remit the scrutiny of all

NHS consultations and of the performance of Health and Adult Social Care services. The Scrutiny Assembly would meet three times per year for the purposes as set out in the report. The report also set out the anticipated benefits of the proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny function.

The Scrutiny Management Board had discussed these proposals and consulted both Group Leaders and Members from each of the political groups. In addition, Professor Steve Leach, Professor of Local Government at De Montford University, who had undertaken a number of reviews of the scrutiny arrangements in local authorities, had been consulted and was in agreement with the proposals.

The detailed changes proposed to the parts of the Constitution relating to the Scrutiny function were set out in Appendix A of the report with other consequent changes to the Constitution being listed in Appendix B of the report for information.

The recommendations of this Committee would be submitted to Full Council in November and, if approved, the new arrangements would come into effect from 1st January 2009.

RESOLVED - THAT COUNCIL BE RECOMMENDED TO APPROVE- the adoption of the proposed changes to the Constitution summarised in the report and detailed in Appendices A and B of the report

CCC-09 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BUDGET PROCEDURE RULES

The report of the Head of Finance set out the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution which related to the Policy Framework and Budget Procedure Rules, as set out in Part 4, Section 3. The proposals would allow for the updating of the process for setting the Budget and Policy Framework to bring the timescales into line with current practices and clarify the relevant roles and responsibilities in order to ensure the effective operation of the budget process.

The process for developing and setting the budget and policy framework was heavily geared around the annual local government finance settlement. In December 2007 the Government had made its first three year grant announcements and the Council had received Revenue Support Grant allocations for 2008/09 and provisional figures for 2009/10 and 2010/11. It was proposed that the current process detailed in the Constitution be updated to reflect this change, as set out in the report and detailed in Appendix A of the report.

The proposal mirrored the actual 2008/09 budget setting process. The consultation period was key to gaining feedback from the Community, Stakeholders and Opposition Groups as was the role of the Value for Money Scrutiny Group. It was, therefore, proposed that any Opposition Group

budget proposals were taken to the Value For Money Scrutiny Group to allow sufficient time for their consideration.

For clarity, the mandatory Standing Orders required by the Local Authority (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001, which dealt with conflict resolution, had been separated into a new section within the Constitution.

RESOLVED – THAT COUNCIL BE RECOMMENDED TO APPROVE the adoption of the proposed changes to the Constitution as summarised in the report and detailed in Appendix A of the report.

The meeting ended at 5.50 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: