

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democracy Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor Boughton (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Fissenden, Mrs Hinder,
Joy, Lewins, Newton, Mrs Ring and Vizzard

Also Present: Councillors Prendergast and Round

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Revell.

8. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Blackmore was present as a substitute for Councillor Revell.

9. URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

10. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Round was in attendance as an observer.

Councillor Prendergast was in attendance to speak on item 14.

11. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

12. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

13. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED:

That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2016

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES - MEMBER DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

The Learning and Development Manager presented the report.

It was agreed that the Questioning Skills workshop should be rescheduled for this year.

The Committee asked if Officers could investigate the possibility of including training dates in the Members Diary's when they are printed.

The Committee asked if the expenditure listed under 'Miscellaneous' on page 15 of the agenda regarding room hire at Oakwood House could be investigated and reported back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Member Development Plan for 2016-2017 be approved with the addition of a Questioning Skills workshop.

That the estimated expenditure for the 2016-2017 Member Development budget be approved with the addition of a Questioning Skills workshop.

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0

17. OPTIONS FOR COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2016-17

The Head of Finance and Resources presented his report and explained that the report offered the Committee an opportunity to consider options for a Committee work plan for 2016-2017. This would provide the Committee and Officers with a focus for the delivery of objectives set by the Committee.

The Committee considered the suggestions made in the report and agreed to the following:

- To continue with the review of Outside Bodies from 2015;
- To carry out a further review of the Constitution with a report coming to Committee around December 2016. To include in the report a section on the election of all Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen at the beginning of the municipal year, not just Service Committees;

- To carry out an officer based review with a Councillor Champion looking at the cost/benefits of the courier system with a report coming to the Committee in September 2016;
- To carry out a scrutiny type review looking at the possibility of changing to a system of four yearly elections;
- To review the Committee System in two years' time (in 2018);

The Committee discussed changing the Committee's meeting days and times. Monday evening was suggested as an alternative. The Committee agreed to discuss this further at a later meeting as some Committee members had other commitments on Monday evenings.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following issues to be included in the Committee Work Plan for 2016/17:

- A continuation of the review of Outside Bodies from 2015;
- A further review of the Constitution with a report coming to Committee around December 2016. To include in the report a section on the election of all Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen (not just Service Committees Chairmen and Vice Chairmen) at the beginning of the municipal year;
- An officer based review, with a Councillor Champion, looking at the cost/benefits of the courier system with a report coming to the Committee in September 2016.

2. That a scrutiny type review of changing to a system of four yearly elections be carried out by the Committee for the municipal year 2016/17.

3. That a work plan for the Committee be produced for the year 2016/17 to be reviewed by the Committee at each Committee meeting.

18. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - OUTSIDE BODY NOMINATIONS FOR APPROVAL

The Committee considered the report on Outside Body nominations and the automatic appointments to Outside Bodies.

RESOLVED:

1. That the nominations for Outside Bodies in Appendix I of the report be approved.
2. That the automatic appointments to Outside Bodies, as shown in paragraph 2.4 of the report be noted.

19. REFERENCE FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE - LICENSING COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Committee considered the reference from the Licensing Committee regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Licensing Committee.

The Committee agreed that the policy development for Licensing should remain with the Communities, Housing and Environment (CHE) Committee. To ensure members of CHE Committee maintained an up to date knowledge of Licensing issues it was agreed that they should attend Licensing training.

Concerns were raised regarding the training of Licensing Committee Members to sit on the Licensing Act Sub-Committee 2003. It was agreed that no Member should sit on this Committee until they had attended the relevant training. Licensing training should be arranged as early into the new municipal year as possible.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to agree that the Constitution be amended to include the following wording as the penultimate sentence at part 4.5, paragraph 1c of the Constitution:

Members will not be eligible to sit on a Licensing Act 2003 Sub-Committee until training, which will be open to all Councillors, has been completed.

20. REFERENCE FROM PLANNING COMMITTEE - TRAINING FOR PLANNING REFERRALS COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee discussed the reference from the Planning Committee regarding training for Planning Referrals Committee Members and Substitute Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Council be recommended to agree that the Constitution be amended to make it a requirement that Members and Substitute Members of the Planning Referrals Committee undergo training on the policies, procedures, legislation and guidance relevant to the work of the Planning Committee. In connection with this, the following wording be included in section 2.8 of Part 2.1 of the Constitution:

No Member will be able to serve on the Planning Referrals Committee without having agreed to undergo training on the policies, procedures, legislation and guidance relevant to the work of the Planning Committee, the details of which are to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups represented on the Committee. The training must be completed before the Committee first meets to discharge its function and must be refreshed as appropriate.