

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor K Wakefield in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, M Dobson (As Substitute for J Blake), S Golton, P Gruen, G Harper, G Latty, A Lowe, E Nash, J Procter, M Rafique and S Varley

Apologies Councillor J Blake

9 Appeals against refusal of inspection of documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

10 Exempt Information - possible exclusion of the press and public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

11 Late items

No formal late items were submitted to the agenda. However supplementary information in relation to Agenda Item 9 "Proposed Community Governance Review to Degroup Barwick and Elmet and Scholes Parish Councils" Minute No. 17 refers was previously circulated to the Committee.

3 representations had been circulated to the Committee from members of the public in relation to Agenda Item 11 "Facilities to be made available for reporting on Council Committee Meetings". Minute No. 19 refers.

12 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

No declarations were made.

13 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Blake. Councillor M Dobson was in attendance as substitute.

14 Minutes 18th June 2013

RESOLVED – The minutes of the meeting held on 28th October were approved as a correct record.

15 Further review of the Plans Panel arrangements

The Head of Planning Services presented a report of the Chief Planning Officer. The report provided a further update to the Committee on the operation of the Plans Panels from April to September 2013.

Members commented that minor issues identified when the new process began had been resolved. It was noted that there had been a recent increase in planning applications and that this had placed pressure on officers and Members. It was also noted that there had been progress on engagement between officers and ward members and that a protocol was due to be discussed at the Joint Plans Panel meeting on 14th November 2013.

Members commented that they would be supportive of City Plans Panels being scheduled on a fortnightly basis when required in order to reduce the length of meetings.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) Note the report and the further on going work to embed the plans panel arrangements;
- (b) Embed the Plans Panel Arrangements permanently as part of the Council's decision making framework; and
- (c) Hold a meeting between senior Members of groups to discuss how the Member / officer protocol will move forward prior to the Joint Plans Panel meeting.

16 Joint Review of Polling Districts and Community Governance Review of Parish and Town Councils - Final Proposals report

The Head of Licensing and Registration presented his report. The report considered final proposals for the joint polling district review and community governance review of all parish and town councils. The report also sought to agree the final proposals for the polling district review to be published on 25 November 2013 and sought to agree the recommended final proposals for the community governance review to go to full Council in November 2013, and to be published on 25 November 2013.

Members considered the report and discussed the proposals.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) note that the summary of final proposals set out in Appendix A, attached to the submitted report, have cross-party support, note the comments from Electoral Working Group re proposal CGR4 and the additional evidence supplied in respect of that proposal and resolve to confirm all as final proposals;

- (b) note the final proposals set out in Appendix B of the submitted report which do not have full party support, and resolve to confirm all as final proposals;
- (c) note the summary of initial proposals set out in Appendix C of the submitted report to which no further comments were received during the second consultation phase, and resolve to confirm all as final proposals;
- (d) note that the final proposals agreed today for the polling district review will be published as part of the Council's Final Notice of Joint Review on 25 November 2013; and
- (e) agree that the recommended final proposals agreed today for the community governance review be submitted to full Council for final approval in 13 November 2013 before being published as part of the notice mentioned in resolution (c) above.

17 Proposed Community Governance Review to degroup Barwick in Elmet and Scholes Parish Councils

The Head of Licensing and Registration presented his report which considered whether a Community Governance Review for the degrouping of Barwick in Elmet & Scholes Parish Council be undertaken.

Members commented that a review had recently taken place and that the petition submitted had been done so without the knowledge of the Parish Council.

It was also noted by Members that the Parish Council were not in support of a review.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved that a Community Governance Review should not take place.

18 Functions in relation to the Late Night Levy

The City Solicitor submitted a report which set out proposals to amend the constitution to reflect the designation of functions in relation to the late night levy as Council functions. The Committee were invited to recommend the proposed amendments to Council.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to recommend to full Council that the amendments to the Constitution, as set out at Appendices A, B and C to the submitted report be approved.

19 Facilities to be made available for reporting on council committee meetings

The City Solicitor submitted a report which outlined the framework within which requests to record can be made and then determined; and set out the range of facilities made available by the Council to those wishing to report on the council's committees, boards and panels.

Members highlighted their concerns over the recording of licensing and planning meetings.

Members commented that councillors were not afforded the same indemnities as were enjoyed by MPs by Parliamentary Privilege. It was suggested that representations to be made to the Secretary of State raise this as an issue that might be further considered by Government, particularly where Members are considering planning and licensing matters.

Members highlighted the problems of selectively recording meetings and considered that ideally committee meetings be audio recorded by the Council and made available to the public.

The City Solicitor commented that the Secretary of State had recently announced his intention to legislate to give the press and the public new rights to film and report council meetings and that it might be advisable to wait and see how this develops before adopting a protocol.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) reaffirm support for the webcasting of full council, and introduce mechanisms whereby, subject to the availability of equipment, meetings of Executive Board and scrutiny boards can be routinely audio recorded by the Council, with these recordings being made available to third parties on request;
- (b) not grant permission to third parties to audio record meetings of planning and licensing committees, nor permit video recording on any committee, board or panel meeting, until clarity is received from DCLG on the issues raised;
- (c) request a further report, once clarity is received from DCLG, and once the parliamentary process have been concluded for the Local Audit and Accountability Bill, setting out a protocol in respect of the recording of committee meetings; and
- (d) That facilities management staff be consulted about the options of providing improved committee room facilities that would enable the Council to record all committee meetings.