WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 22 OCTOBER 2019

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr John Robini (Chairman)
Cllr Michael Goodridge (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Brian Adams
Cllr John Gray

Cllr Jerry Hyman
Cllr Robert Knowles
Cllr Peter Marriott

Apologies
Cllr Paul Follows and Cllr Penny Marriott

STD 8/19 MINUTES (Agenda item 1.)

8.1   The Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 July 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

STD 9/19 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 3.)

9.1   There were no interests disclosed in relation to the items on the agenda.

STD 10/19 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4.)

10.1   There were no questions from members of the public.

STD 11/19 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 5.)

11.1   There were no questions from Members of the Council.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Background Papers

Unless specified under an individual item, there are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the reports in Part I of these minutes.

STD 12/19 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES (Agenda item 6.) (Pages 5 - 6)

12.1   The Chairman introduced this item, which invited the Committee to consider, and make recommendations on, proposals from the Deputy Leader to amend certain Council Procedure Rules.

12.2   **Removal of the requirement to stand to speak at Full Council (PR 21.1)**

12.2.1 Committee Members agreed that any Member who, due to illness or disability, was unable to stand to speak at Council should be given dispensation to remain seated, and the Mayor had discretion to agree this if circumstances required it. It was also noted that a few Councils, including Guildford, had removed the requirement to stand to speak at Full Council meetings following the installation of new microphones and web-casting equipment, to ensure that their Members could use the microphones without stooping.

12.2.2 However, the Committee felt strongly that standing to speak and address the Mayor at Full Council was a mark of respect for the Mayor and their status as Chairman of the Council and the Queen's representative. There were also practical aspects, in that it was clear to everyone in the Council Chamber who was speaking if they stood up; and only one Member was allowed to stand and speak at any time.

12.2.3 The Committee RESOLVED unanimously that it did not wish to make a recommendation to amend Procedure Rule 21.1.

12.3   **Questions by members of the Public (PR 10)**

12.3.1 Following the re-instatement of Informal Questions before meetings of the Executive, it was proposed that a similar arrangement be re-instated before meetings of Full Council.

12.3.2 The Committee noted that informal questions, lasting 15 minutes, had been introduced originally in 2003 before all committee meetings. It was noted that asking questions without notice carried a risk of not getting a comprehensive response at the meeting. It was also noted that it had been some time since there had been an appreciable number of questions from the public on a regular basis at Council meetings.

12.3.3 The Committee was content to see the re-instatement of informal questions before Full Council, on the same basis as they had operated previously and on a trial basis to see how it works. It was important that the Council meeting still started on time at 7pm, so informal questions would need to start commence at 6.45pm.

12.3.4 **The Committee RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to Council the re-instatement of informal questions before the start of Council meetings, on the same basis as the had operated previously and on a trial basis; and delegated approval of the revised wording to Procedure Rule 10 to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.**

At 5.50pm, the Committee agreed to adjourn proceedings in order to take part in a demonstration of the Council Chamber electronic voting system. At 6.05pm, the meeting resumed.

12.4   **Electronic voting (PR 17)**

12.4.1 The Committee noted that the Procedure Rules already allowed for any vote referred to in PR 17 to be conducted using any electronic voting system available in the Council Chamber, and that it had been proposed by the Council Leadership that the electronic voting be used at meetings of Full Council and Planning Committee meetings for 1 October.

12.4.2 The Committee had been asked to consider the proposal that where the electronic voting system was used in Full Council or a Planning Committee meeting, the requirement of PR17.4 for a Member to formally request a recorded vote, with the support of five other Members, be waived and the names for and against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting would be entered into the minutes.

12.4.3 The Committee thanked officers for the helpful demonstration of the electronic voting system. The Committee agreed that, in principle, they had no objection to the use of the electronic voting system in Full Council; and they could be persuaded of its benefits in Joint Planning Committee. However, the Committee did not feel that it would be worthwhile in meetings of the Area Planning Committees as it would take longer than voting by show of hands, and it was important that members of the public in the gallery should be able to see how Members had voted.

12.4.4 The Committee had some concerns about the way the results were displayed on the screen, and asked officers to explore whether this could be improved, for example by increasing the size of the font so that it was easier to read.

12.4.5 With regard to recorded votes by default at Full Council and Planning Committees, the Committee had seen the way that the names of Members and the way they had voted was displayed on the main screen in the Council Chamber, and on the television facing the public gallery. They were concerned that the display of the names was too small and unclear, especially on the screen facing the public gallery, which would make it difficult if not impossible for Members and the public to see how Members had voted until the results were published on-line and in the Minutes.

12.4.6 In conclusion, the Committee RESOLVED that the decision on whether electronic recorded voting should be the default in Full Council and Planning Committees should be deferred until Officers had explored with the software provider how the display of recorded votes could be improved to ensure that the display was clear for Members in the Chamber and members of the public in the gallery, as well as viewers of the webcast.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 6.25 pm

Chairman

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Council PR 10 (July 2019)

10.0 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

10.1 General

Members of the public who have a legitimate interest in the Borough, by way of work or residency, may ask a question at ordinary meetings of the Full Council, Executive and Committees. Questions by the public will not be included as an item on agendas for Special or Extraordinary meetings. Questions may be informal or formal.

Informal questions

10.2 Informal questions may be asked of the Executive before the start of ordinary meetings of Full Council and the Executive for up to 15 minutes, including replies. No notice needs to be given.

10.3 Questions will be taken in the order in which questioners register with the Democratic Services Officer prior to the start of question time. When read out, each question must be concluded within 2 minutes. In the event that it is not possible to give a verbal response, a written response will be provided following the meeting. ~~The rules for asking a written question are set out in Procedure Rules 10.2-10.7 below.~~

~~Written~~ Formal questions

10.4 Notice of ~~written~~ formal questions

A ~~written~~ formal question may only be submitted if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Head of Policy and Governance no later than close of business (5.00pm), 4 clear working days before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner.

10.5 Order of questions

Questions will be listed in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor or Chairman may group together similar questions.

10.64 Number of questions

At any one meeting no person may submit more than 1 formal question and no more than 1 such question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

10.7 Scope of questions

The Chief Executive may reject a question if it:
- is not a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months;
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or

- is not substantially in the form of a question, or the length of the preamble is disproportionate to the question.

10.8 Record of ~~written~~ formal questions

The Chief Executive will immediately send a copy of the question to the Chairman of the Executive and relevant Portfolio Holder. Where the Chief Executive recommends that the question be rejected, reasons for rejection will be stated. Copies of all questions and answers will be circulated and made available to councillors and the public attending the meeting. All ~~written~~ formal questions submitted will receive a prepared answer.

10.9 Reference of question to the Executive or Committee

Unless the Mayor decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the Executive or the appropriate named Committee or Sub-Committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

~~10.8 Informal questions at the Executive~~

~~Members of the public may ask informal questions of the Executive before the start of each ordinary meeting of the Executive, in accordance with the arrangements at Executive Procedure Rule 2.9.~~

Executive Procedure Rules (July 2019)

2.9 Questions by the Public

Informal questions

2.9.1~~2~~ Informal questions may be asked of the Leader, Deputy Leader or an appropriate Portfolio Holder before the start of each ordinary meeting of the Executive for up to 15 minutes, including replies. No prior notice needs to be given. Questions will be taken in the order in which questioners register with the Democratic Services Officer prior to the start of question time. When read out, each question must be concluded within 2 minutes. In the event that it is not possible to give a verbal response, a written response will be provided following the meeting.

~~Written~~ Formal questions

2.9.2~~1~~ Members of the public may ask ~~written~~ formal questions at ordinary meetings of the Executive in accordance with the provisions in Council Procedure Rules 10.4 – 10.9. The Leader and/or the Deputy Leader or appropriate portfolio holder should be invited to respond to the question.