

REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF STRATEGIC (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

PRESENT:

Councillors Strachan (Chairman), A Yeates (Vice-Chair), Mrs Woodward (Vice-Chair), Mrs Barnett, Drinkwater, Greatorex, Powell and White.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors Mrs Baker, Cox, Pullen, Pritchard, Spruce, Warfield and Wilcox attended the meeting).

Apologies were received from Councillors Constable and Tittley

At the special meeting of the Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 21st March 2018 the following matters were considered:

1 LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION
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- 1.1 The Committee received a report on the revised Lichfield District Council Constitution and was introduced to Mrs Lorraine Fowkes, Solicitor at South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) who has been commissioned to redraft the document such that it is easier to navigate and require less complicated updating.
- 1.2 It was reported that the Constitution was last comprehensively reviewed in 2002 although it has been updated frequently. The Committee also noted that the draft received did not incorporate all comments received or required amendments.
- 1.3 It was noted that at the last Strategic (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee, a Member Task Group was created comprising Councillors Tittley, Powell, Mrs Woodward and the Leader of the Council. This Task Group met on the 15th March and their comments were reported.
- 1.4 The Committee then considered the Task Group's views in turn beginning with the revised Constitution as a whole document. There was a difference of opinion on whether it should be a single document or broken up into a number of documents covering the different parts of the Constitution however it was agreed that it needed to be easily accessible electronically especially for Members at meetings and one document would aid this.
- 1.5 It was also agreed that it should be specified that a Cabinet meeting should be quorate only if either the Leader of Deputy Leader was in attendance as well as there being the minimum number of members to be quorate.
- 1.6 It was agreed that the Chairman of the Strategic (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee should also be the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Coordination Group. It was felt that it should be highlighted that that the position of Council Chairman should be non-partisan and include promotion of public involvement.
- 1.7 Reference to governance in the context of commercial decision making within the Constitution was then considered and it was felt that without it, the Council could be exposed to risk of a lack of transparency in decision making. It was noted that procedure were already within the Constitution to deal with urgent decisions including calling urgent meetings if necessary. It was agreed to aid transparency, urgent decision notices should be shared with the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Vice-Chairmen as well

as the Chairmen. It was noted that some wording had been added in Part 2 11.8 to the effect that Lichfield District Council may work in partnership to assist in Commercialisation and will be subject to the Council's normal governance procedures.

- 1.8 It was considered by the Committee whether the Parish Forum should continue. It was felt that it was potentially useful however attendance had been low and with the same people attending. A number of suggestions were given including meeting only when there is a need and using newsletters in between. It was also suggested that Staffordshire County Council be included in the membership to create a more joined up approach. It was felt that the Parish Forum could be a real engine to show Parish Councils what services they could be capable of delivering locally and how they could be supported in doing this. Neighbourhood Planning was given as an example. It was noted that there wasn't a high attendance of District Councillors at Parish Council meetings and it was a two way street. It was agreed to continue with the Parish Forum and review it again at the end of the current Council term.
- 1.9 Flexibility in Committee membership was agreed to continue and for Overview & Scrutiny to be set at between 9 and 13 members. When asked it was noted that part of a Vice-Chairman's remuneration was to cover the Chairman's role if absent.
- 1.10 The 75% attendance rule regarding remuneration was then discussed and it was agreed that it was resource intensive for Officers to implement. It was also agreed that the scheme was not equitable as some Councillors were required to attend more meetings than others and did not account for Members in employment. It was agreed to remove the rule from the remuneration scheme. The introduction of Mod Gov would see all attendance being made public in real time in any event.
- 1.11 It was also agreed to give a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Vice Chairman of Employment Committee and the Vice-Chairman of Audit & Member Standards Committee to be consistent with other Committees.
- 1.12 It was agreed that the updated Lichfield District Council Constitution be endorsed with the comments included and recommended to Full Council for approval and adoption.

2 VOTE OF THANKS

- 2.1 It was proposed, duly seconded and resolved that the sincere thanks of the Committee be recorded to all the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for their work during the past year.

R Strachan
Chairman
Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee