

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 15 December 2015 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs S Griggs (Chairman)
N V Davey, Mrs J Roach, F J Rosamond,
C R Slade, Mrs M E Squires,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, L D Taylor and
R J Chesterton

Also Present

Officer(s):

Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Philip Langdon (Solicitor and deputy Monitoring Officer) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

1 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public in attendance.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

4 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies.

5 DRAFT CONSTITUTION

The Committee had before it a report * from the Head of Communities and Governance and the updated Constitution for their consideration.

The Officer reminded the Committee that a Members working group had been set up and had worked to draft a revised Constitution. One of the areas that the working group had focused on was to make the Constitution more accessible and to improve the layout. The Committee had already reviewed the draft document at a previous meeting and agreed the changes that had been made.

The Officer explained that page numbering had not yet been entered into the index as the numbering would alter when the tracked changes were accepted. This would take place when all of the agreed changes had been made.

The Officer worked through the changes that had been made at the request of the Committee.

Discussion took place regarding the allocation of work to the Policy Development Groups (PDG's). There were currently three PDG's but the Corporate Plan contained four priorities, Environment, Housing, Community Well Being and Economy. The Committee discussed whether or not it would be appropriate to add another PDG to cover the economy or whether this could be absorbed by an existing PDG.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Communities and Governance would prepare a further report for the Committee, outlining what came under each PDG and how it fitted with the Corporate Plan objectives, as well as recommendations regarding how many members should sit on each PDG and how often it should meet.

The Officer explained that she had undertaken research regarding what information other authorities used in their Constitutions to identify what constituted a key decision. She explained that most specified a figure that was 'significant' and it was **AGREED** that this amount should be £50k.

It was **AGREED** that the wording bi-monthly led to confusion and should be replaced by 'every two months'.

Discussion took place regarding sections 8 and 9 on page 92 regarding the process of decision making, and whether the section added any value. It was **AGREED** that this section should be removed.

The Officer informed Members that sections regarding Councillor Call for Action, the Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters and Reports and Recommendations for Calls for Action, had been added to the document.

Discussion took place regarding the Call for Action and whether or not Members could request that an agenda item be added to the County Council Scrutiny agenda as well as to their own. It was **AGREED** that the Monitoring Officer would investigate this and report back to the Committee.

Page 136 contained information in table format which was considered unclear and difficult to read. It was **AGREED** that this be added as an appendix and text be added to the section.

The Committee discussed the matter of standing to speak at Council. The Officer informed them that she had spoken to the Facilities Manager who had confirmed that the new recording equipment was designed to be used from a seated position; however the Committee considered that it was difficult for the public to identify who was speaking if they did not stand. It was **AGREED** that this matter be reviewed following a Planning and Council meeting when the equipment would be used.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Communities and Governance would investigate the reference to four Members of the Scrutiny Committee being required to call a meeting.

The Committee discussed the section on page 45 regarding who sanctions Councillors. The current version stated that this responsibility fell to the Chief

Executive but Members felt that the Standards Committee may be more appropriate. It was **AGREED** that the new Chief Executive be asked his opinion on this matter when he was in post.

It was **AGREED** that the availability of the Constitution, referred to on page 51, include a paper version.

Discussion took place regarding the section on page 114 regarding substitutions. The Constitution currently quoted that only two substitutions could be made per party group per meeting. The Committee requested that the Head of Communities and Governance investigate to find out if this was set out in legislation.

Members thanked the Officer for the work that had been undertaken.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Council that subject to the following amendments:

A key decision to be £50k or over;
The wording bi-monthly be replaced by 'every two months';
The section on page 92 regarding decision making be removed;
The removal of the table on page 136 and the addition of appropriate text;
The inclusion of a paper version on page 51.

the Constitution be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr C R Slade and seconded by Cllr F J Colthorpe)

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

6 **COMPLAINTS**

There were no formal complaints reported.

7 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Complaints
Policy Development Group Review
Review of the microphones

(The meeting ended at 7.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN