



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

General Purposes

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **General Purposes** held on **Wednesday 26th February, 2020**, Room 18.01, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Paul Swaddle (Chairman), Melvyn Caplan (Vice-Chairman), David Boothroyd and Mark Shearer

Also Present: Councillors

Apologies for Absence:

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Mark Shearer had replaced Councillor Gotz Mohindra.
- 1.2 There were no further changes to the Membership.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations.
- 2.2 The chairman commented that it was unnecessary for councillors to make a declaration in respect of item 4 (Members' Allowances Scheme 2020-21) as all members of the council have a direct non-disclosable pecuniary interest in the item.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 That the Chairman, with the consent of the members present, signed the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2020 as a true and correct record of proceedings.

4 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2020-2021

- 4.1 The Head of Committee and Governance Services introduced the report and advised that the proposed scheme, effective from 1 April 2020 for 2020-2021 has been prepared on the basis of the current scheme. As in previous year's regard was given to the findings and recommendations detailed in the report of the London Council's Independent Panel on the Remuneration of Councillors which was last published in January 2018.
- 4.2 The committee had previously endorsed the principle of increasing members' allowances as a minimum in line with the increase awarded to all staff. Therefore, basic and special responsibility allowances had been inflated by 2% to reflect the proposed increase in salary for local authority staff in 2020-21 proposed by the employers' side of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. In the event that the salary increase for Council staff agreed by the NJC exceeds 2% it was proposed that members' allowances are increased further by this difference which will be back dated to the 1 April 2020.
- (d) In considering the proposals the Committee noted the views of both political parties of the council. Councillor Boothroyd, on behalf of the minority party, highlighted that it has two deputy leaders and he suggested that both should be eligible for the associated allowance in the same manner as is afforded to the two deputy leaders of the majority party. The Committee supported this amendment to the proposed scheme.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council be recommended to approve the Members' Allowances Scheme attached as Appendix A to the report for 2020-2021 with effect from 1 April 2020 subject to the amendment that both deputy leaders of the minority party be eligible to receive the associated allowance for the post.
2. That the Council be recommended to agree to increase the Members' Allowances (Basis and SRA) attached in Appendix A to the report for 2020-2021 in line with any salary increase for Council staff that may be agreed above 2% by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

5 CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES: REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

- 5.1 The Committee considered a report that set out proposals to reorganise the roles of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees, including reducing their number from 5 Committees to 4, following a reduction in the number of Cabinet Members from 10 to 9.
- 5.2 The report highlighted that the proposed changes are intended to ensure each Committee scrutinises two Cabinet Members. This will ensure consistency across each Committee and provide adequate time for each to consider other agenda items. The responsibilities included in the Leader of the Council's terms of reference will continue to be scrutinised by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, the overarching body of the Council that is responsible for overseeing the policy and scrutiny function of the authority.

- 5.3 The new Policy and Scrutiny Committees will have the same proportionality as the previous policy and scrutiny committees; namely 5 majority party members and 3 minority party members.
- 5.4 The chairmen of each of the council's policy and scrutiny committees are included in the membership of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission. The proposals recommended reducing the membership of the Commission by one seat to reflect the proposed reduction in the number of committees and to ensure that it remains proportional.
- 5.5 Councillor Boothroyd, on behalf of the Minority Party, stated that other authorities have a greater number of scrutiny committees. He put forward an alternative proposal whereby the remit of the committees are structured around the council's directorates rather than the Cabinet Member portfolios.
- 5.6 Councillor Caplan stated that as the political accountability for services lies with the executive he considered that it was right and proper for the committee remits to be based on scrutinising Cabinet Members and holding them to account for their decisions through a regular question and answer session. The Chairman stated that the committees had the ability to establish task and finish groups to undertake specific additional pieces of work.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council be recommended to agree the reorganisation of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees, which includes reducing them in number from 5 to 4 with the same proportionality and allocation of seats as per paragraph 4.5 of the report.
2. That the Council be recommended to amend the membership of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission by one Majority Party Member to reflect the reduction in the number of committee chairmen.
3. That the Council authorise Officers to adjust the terms of reference and names of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees to reflect the changes in the Cabinet Member reporting lines as shown in paragraph 4.8 of the report.

The Meeting ended at 6.10 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____