



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

General Purposes

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **General Purposes** held at 6.00pm on **Wednesday 27th February, 2019** in Room 18.04, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Tim Mitchell (Chairman), David Boothroyd, Melvyn Caplan and Jacqui Wilkinson

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Melvyn Caplan and Councillor Jacqui Wilkinson had replaced Councillors Robert Rigby and Paul Swaddle.

1.2 There were no further changes to the Membership.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations.

3 MINUTES

3.1 That the Chairman, with the consent of the members present, signed the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019 as a true and correct record of proceedings.

4 ELECTORAL REVIEW OF THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION - SUBMISSION FROM THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER

4.1 The Committee considered a draft submission by the City of Westminster to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the council size. This submission formed part of the preliminary stage of the Commission's Electoral Review of the City of Westminster.

4.2 The Manager of Legal and Electoral Services Support tabled a revised draft submission which included more detail on the rationale for reducing the number of councillors from 60 to 54. This included evidence of the increasing number of backbench councillors that are not involved in the broader governance of the council and how the interaction between councillors, stakeholders and residents had evolved since the last review approximately

twenty years ago as well as a comparison of electoral population to councillors in neighbouring boroughs.

- 4.3 The Committee agreed that the proposal to reduce the number of members from 60 to 54 was feasible but that any further reduction would have an adverse impact on council business and councillor's work load. Members noted that since 2006 a significant number of Members had not sat on either a Policy and & Scrutiny Committee or an Audit & Performance Committee. The Committee agreed that for optimum councillor effectiveness, a significant majority of members should have a place in the Executive or the broader governance of the Council as a whole, as well as their Ward role.
- 4.4 Members discussed the current ratio of councillors per ward. It was suggested that retaining three councillors per ward was preferable. Members commented that a reduction in numbers could make it more challengeable and cause difficulties for ward councillors in particular in balancing their daily Council duties and those of their constituencies. Members commented that having an odd number of councillors in each Ward would help to alleviate the above-mentioned concerns.
- 4.5 Members supported the inclusion of information regarding the Council's vision to create a 'City of All' alongside the 'unique characteristics' that are found within the Borough.
- 4.6 The Committee discussed Westminster's future population projections which were set out in section 4.4 of the submission. Members requested that the Boundary Commission's electoral and growth forecasts be removed as it was considered that the Council's own projections, which include regional planning approvals, would be more accurate. The Committee noted that a reduction to 54 Councillors would still put Westminster City Council in the lower quartile of councillors to electors in London.
- 4.7 The Committee also put forward a number of minor additional formatting revisions.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised submission as tabled be agreed as the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council size subject to the requested amendments as set out above.
2. That the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be circulated to all members.

The Meeting ended at 6.40 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____