

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CONSTITUTION ADVISORY GROUP** held at Room 15 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 18 October 2010

PRESENT

Cllr S F Male (Chairman)

Cllrs Mrs C F Chapman MBE
D Jones

Cllrs M R Jones
A Shadbolt

Apology for Absence: Cllr D J Lawrence

Officers in Attendance	Mr J Atkinson	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
	Ms C Cooper	Temporary Democratic Services Officer
	Ms M Peaston	Interim Committee Services Manager

CAG/09/80 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr David Lawrence.

CAG/09/81 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 13 July 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAG/09/82 **Oral Questions at Council**

The Acting Committee Services Manager presented a report detailing matters for consideration further to a comment made at the last Council meeting on procedures set out in the Constitution for "oral" questions. It had been noted that the procedures for "oral" questions were complicated by the need to time the periods for specific kinds of questions.

The report set out three options which included removing the need to draft "oral" questions in advance, using coloured card to differentiate between different kinds of questions during the Oral Questions section, and confining specific kinds of questions to certain parts of the meeting.

Members commented that confining all matters relating to the Fire and Police Authorities to one part of the agenda would offer a practical solution. It would be appropriate for a 10-minute time limit to be imposed. Separately, the period for "oral" questions could run for 45 minutes without any need to discriminate between the different kinds of questions.

The Advisory Group also commented that the term "oral" questions was a misnomer as the Constitution required that they were drafted in advance before

the meeting started. Members concurred that the term “open” questions was more appropriate.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 1. that Part B5 of the Constitution be amended with the revisions as set out at Appendix A to these minutes;**
- 2. that Part B5 of the Constitution be amended to replace the term “Oral Questions” with the term “Open Questions”, also set out at Appendix A to these minutes.**

CAG/09/83 Formalising the Constitution Advisory Group in the Constitution

The Acting Committee Services Manager presented a report proposing an amendment to the Constitution to provide for the inclusion of membership requirements for the Constitution Advisory Group.

It was noted that currently, although the role of the Advisory Group was included in the Constitution, there was no mention of the membership requirements.

Members discussed whether the Chairman and/or the Vice-Chairman of the Council should be a member of the Advisory Group by reason of their office, and formed the view that either the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman should be required to be a member. Members also concurred that a member of the Executive should be included in the membership.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

to amend the Constitution at Part A5 (as shown at Appendix B to these minutes) by the addition of a new paragraph at paragraph 2.2 as set out below, and then renumber the paragraphs which follow.

new paragraph 2.2:

“The Constitution Advisory Group will be appointed annually at the Annual Council meeting and will comprise a membership of 6, proportionate to the political structure of the Council, with one substitute member. The membership of the Advisory Group shall include the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the Council and at least one member of the Executive.”

CAG/09/84 Petition Scheme - Cross-reference with the Public Participation Scheme

The Acting Committee Services Manager presented a report on the need to cross reference aspects of the Petitions Scheme with the Public Participation Scheme. It was noted that the proposed amendment would not alter current practice but would provide clearer guidance.

The Advisory Group's attention was drawn to a letter which had been sent by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to all local authorities advising that previous statutory guidance in relation to petition schemes did not need to be observed. The Advisory Group noted that the arrangements for petitions were already in place and that there was no need for any change to the Council's Petitions Scheme.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

to insert the following wording at Part A4 Annex 2 Petitions Scheme paragraph 1.1 at the end of the first sentence after the words Monitoring Officer:

“subject to the provisions of the General Principles Governing All Public Participation set out at Part A4 Appendix A section 2 of the Constitution.”

(The amendment is set out at Appendix C to these minutes.)

CAG/09/85 Constitution on the Council's Website

The Acting Committee Services Manager gave an oral update on the status of the electronic version of the Constitution. It was noted that the website was currently being updated.

Discussion ensued on making a PDF version of the Constitution available for Members' use on their laptops. It was considered that the PDF version should be reviewed by members of the Advisory Group before being made available to other members of the Authority.

AGREED

that a PDF version of the Constitution would be emailed to Advisory Group members for review.

CAG/09/86 Work Programme

The Advisory Group considered the current Work Programme. Discussion ensued and various items were removed. It was agreed that they would be the subject of discussion by the Chairman with the appropriate officers to enable determination of whether they were required to be brought forward.

(Note: Following discussions between the Chairman and the appropriate officers, none of the items which the Advisory Group had been minded to remove from the Work Programme were identified as requiring to be put back onto the Work Programme.)

AGREED:-

that the Work Programme be amended and replaced with the updated Programme attached at Appendix D to these minutes.

CAG/09/87 **Consultation with Leader on Member Development Matters**

The Advisory Group considered a report proposing an amendment of the Constitution at Part H3 paragraph 4.7.31.

The amendment would provide for consultation with the Leader on Member development matters, in addition to the Lead Champion for elected Member Development and, where appropriate, the relevant Group Leader.

It was noted that this amendment would be consistent with the Council's anticipated adoption of the "strong Leader and cabinet" model. The Advisory Group was aware that advice from the IDeA in this area suggested that it is good practice for top political leadership to show commitment to the development of elected Members. The proposal also supported the Council's objectives of achieving Member Development Charter status.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

that Part H3 4.7.31 of the Constitution be amended to provide for consultation with the Leader on Member development matters, as set out at Appendix E to these minutes.

CAG/09/88 **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 2 December 2010 at 2.00pm in Room 13., Priory House.

The date for the following meeting, 21 March 2011 at 2.00pm, would be held in reserve.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and concluded at 3.30 p.m.)