

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 14 March 2013

PRESENT

Cllr R C Stay (Vice-Chairman)
(In the chair)

Cllrs P N Aldis
J G Jamieson
D J Lawrence
Mrs J G Lawrence

Cllrs K C Matthews
J Murray
B Saunders
N Warren

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs G Clarke
P Hollick
M R Jones

Members in Attendance: Cllr D Jones

Officers in Attendance: Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Mr J Atkinson – Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr P Fraser – Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement
Ms M Peaston – Committee Services Manager

GPC/12/1 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 28 January 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

GPC/12/2 **Members' Interests**

None.

GPC/12/3 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

GPC/12/4 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

GPC/12/5 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

GPC/12/6 **Houghton Regis Town Centre Management Committee: Amended Terms of Reference**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services which advised Members that the Houghton Regis Town Centre Management Committee had recently undergone an exercise to review its Terms of Reference with the aim of it becoming a joint/partnership committee in line with those that already existed for Dunstable, Biggleswade and Leighton-Linslade.

It was noted that, at its full Council meeting on 28 January 2013, Houghton Regis Town Council had endorsed the revised Terms of Reference and resolved that Central Bedfordshire Council be advised that the Town Council would welcome the replacement of the Management Committee with a Houghton Regis Partnership Committee to consider and act on issues relating to Houghton Regis.

To this end the Committee's support was sought regarding the adoption of the revised Terms of Reference and their incorporation into the Council's Constitution.

Local ward Members spoke in support of the revised Terms of Reference and, in particular, commented positively to the extension of the Partnership Committee's remit to include the town as a whole and not just its centre.

Debate then took place on a suggestion that a requirement for named substitutes be included within the new Terms of Reference, as was found in the Terms of Reference for Biggleswade Joint Committee. Whilst Members noted the reasons for this suggestion it was noted that not all of the other joint/partnership committees incorporated a similar requirement. A proposed amendment to the recommendation before Members regarding the inclusion of a reference to named substitutes was, therefore, defeated. It was acknowledged that the issue could be reviewed at a future meeting of the General Purposes Committee should this be necessary.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

that the revised Terms of Reference for the Houghton Regis Town Centre Management Committee , as set out in Appendix A to these minutes, be approved and adopted and the Committee become the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee.

GPC/12/7

Business at Council Meetings

The Committee considered a report by the Monitoring Officer which advised of the concern expressed by a Member that due to the budget setting Council meeting being followed by the annual Council meeting, at neither of which could the minority groups raise issues through notices on motion and written questions, there was no opportunity over a lengthy period for minority groups to raise issues at Council meetings. A request had therefore been made by the Member that the position be reviewed.

The Monitoring Officer reminded the meeting of the existing provisions within the Constitution which allowed Members to raise issues at ordinary meetings of Council; these being through written questions, notices of motion and ward presentations. He also reminded the Committee that the annual meeting of the Council could not include written questions, notices of motion or ward presentations on its agenda whilst the budget setting meeting could not include written questions or notices of motion, although ward presentations were permitted.

The Committee noted that attempts had been made in the past to include an ordinary meeting of the Council following the budget setting meeting, without increasing the overall number of Council meetings throughout the year, but this had proved to be impractical. The revised timetable would not be conducive to the cycle of Executive meetings which, in turn, needed to mesh with overview and scrutiny committee meeting dates.

Members noted that while ward presentations could provide information to a meeting of the Council no debate was permitted nor was there opportunity to ask questions and no motions could arise for the Council to vote on. Written questions provided a means of drawing a matter to the Council's attention but a reply could be secured from the relevant Executive Member outside of the Council meeting. The Committee was advised that of the mechanisms available it was motions on notice that allowed full debate at a meeting and a resolution to undertake specific action.

It was suggested that the Constitution could be amended to allow a limited number of notices on motion to be considered at the budget setting meeting and the annual Council meeting subject to their meeting certain provisions such as the agreement of the Chairman in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the issues raised being time critical and significant in nature.

Members also considered introducing consistency between the budget setting meeting and the annual meeting by removing the provision for ward presentations at the former.

RESOLVED

that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to draft wording to amend the Constitution, reflecting the Committee's views as detailed below, for recommendation to Council.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- 1 that the Constitution be amended to include provision for up to two motions on notice at the budget setting meeting of the Council and up to two motions on notice at the annual meeting of the Council subject in both cases to the matter being significant or time critical and to the Chairman's agreement, after consultation with the Monitoring Officer, being secured at least 7 clear working days in advance of the meeting to include the motions in the business of the meeting;**
- 2 that paragraph 15.1 of Part B5 of the Constitution be amended to remove the provision for ward presentations at the budget setting meeting of the Council.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.27 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated