

CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00pm on 17 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillors J Davey, A Ketteridge, J Menell, D Morson, D Watson and L Wells.

Officers present: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive - Legal) and M Cox (Democratic Services Officer).

CWG1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor J Menell be elected as Chairman of the Working Group for the ensuing year.

CWG2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence received.

CWG3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CWG4 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute CWG15 – the role of working groups

Councillor Morson said the motion he had submitted to Council had not led to a resolution and the Liberal Democrat Group had withdrawn membership of the Local Plan Working Group until such time as members of the press and public were invited to attend the meetings.

CWG5 REVIEW OF THE WORKING OF THE CABINET SYSTEM

The working group considered a request from a member of the council for a review to be undertaken into the workings of the Cabinet system.

Councillor Morson explained that the Scrutiny Committee had canvassed the views of all members in 2012 but unfortunately the timing of the questionnaire had led to only 40% of the forms being returned. The results had concluded that the Cabinet system was marginally acceptable but there had been insufficient information to form a clear view.

The working group discussed whether a review should be undertaken. Most members felt that as the council was reaching the end of its 4 year term this

would be a useful exercise to determine whether the cabinet arrangements were working as originally intended. The review should be completed in a timely manner to ensure that any recommendation could be considered by Full Council before the lead up to the 2015 election.

On the basis of the discussion, the Chief Executive suggested a structured approach to include the following:

- The review should be Member led.
- The working group needs to understand how the Cabinet system is currently working.
- Members could then reflect on how this compares with the aims of the original proposal, referring to the reports to Council in 2011.
- The results of the Scrutiny Committee survey should also be taken into account.
- There should be consultation with members/ customers as appropriate.
- A report to be taken to Full Council on 21 October 2014.

The working group AGREED with this approach. The Chief Executive would liaise initially with the Chairman to agree the terms of reference and an outline programme. A further meeting of the working group would be arranged.

CWG4

RECORDING OF VOTES AT PLANNING COMMITTEES

The Chairman said that at recent planning committee meetings there had been a trend for certain members to request a recorded vote on major planning applications. She asked for clarification, as she was aware that some members found this practise intimidating. The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal advised that under the Council's Constitution any member of a committee had the right to call for a recorded vote.

The meeting ended 6.35 pm