

**CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00pm on 2 DECEMBER 2014**

Present: Councillor J Menell (Chairman)
Councillors J Davey and L Wells.

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

CWG12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Evans, D Morson, J Rich, D Watson and S Howell.

CWG13 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CWG14 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING

The Full Council meeting on 21 October 2014 had considered the working group's report on overview and scrutiny under the Cabinet system. Members had generally welcomed the comments made and the possible recommendations for a way forward. The meeting had suggested that the Chief Executive could arrange a Member workshop on scrutiny to consider ways that it could work more effectively within the council.

The Chief Executive said that as it was now only 5 months until the district elections, it would probably be more appropriate for this issue to be considered by the new council as part of the Member induction process.

Officers had started to look at some of the concerns, particularly in relation to pre-scrutiny for the budget process. As a result, for this year's budget the reports for the scrutiny committee had been produced at an earlier stage and at a more strategic level.

It was AGREED that the proposed scrutiny workshop be deferred until after the May elections.

CWG15 NEW STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL FROM MAY 2015

At the previous meeting, the working group had agreed to review the council's current structure of committees and working groups and consider a new structure based on 39 seats, following the district election in May 2015.

It was noted that the council structure for 2015/16 would be determined at the first meeting of the new council in May 2015 and any proposal put forward at this stage will not be binding on the new council. However, it was useful now to consider how the reduction of members from 44 to 39 could be accommodated within the structure, and to develop a draft timetable, so that at least in the initial stages of the new council, the day-to-day business of the council could continue.

Members received information on the council's structure, terms of reference and existing timetabling arrangements.

The report recommended 2 changes to the existing structure

- i) To delete the Staff Appeals Committee. This committee had not met for over 6 years, as the council has changed the way that it dealt with appeals from its employees. The group agreed that it wasn't sensible to appoint members to a committee that didn't meet.
- ii) To reduce the membership on the two regulatory committees. It was suggested the membership of both Licencing and Planning should be 10, as per the overview and scrutiny committees. The Assistant Chief Executive-Legal confirmed that 10 members was an adequate number for the Licensing Committee. In relation to the Planning Committee, Members suggested that a membership of 12 was a more appropriate number as this committee met frequently and would need to cover for member absence.

These two suggested changes would still provide each member with a seat on council and one of the main committees.

It was agreed that the terms of reference for the main committees should be left for the new council to consider. Members considered the terms of reference of the council's three working groups. It was clear that the work undertaken by the Electoral and Constitution working groups and the LJC was ongoing, and these working groups should remain in the structure.

The working group then considered a table setting out the current frequency of the various committee meetings, on which principles the timetable of meetings has been based for the last four years. Many of the dates were determined by operational deadlines, particularly in relation to budget setting.

At this stage Members considered that the timetable of meetings for 2015/16 should be prepared on a similar basis to previous years. However, in the light of previous discussion on scrutiny the new council might wish to consider the most appropriate way to timetable these meetings.

It was AGREED that a report be prepared for Full Council recommending a council structure for 2015/16 and frequency of meetings based on the comments made above

The meeting ended 6.30 pm