

**CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.30pm on 23 JUNE 2015**

Present: Councillor V Ranger (Chairman)  
Councillors A Dean, J Freeman, B Light, E Oliver and J Parry

Officers present: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive - Legal) and P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager)

**CWG1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Chambers and S Harris.

**CWG2 MINUTES**

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

**CWG3 ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS TO REPLACE AREA FORUMS**

The Chief Executive summarised the position following the Council's decision to remove area forums from the Constitution. The Leader had invited Councillor Davies, as lead member for communications, to head a project, in collaboration with the Working Group, to consider alternative ways of engaging with the wider community and with parish councils in seeking views on the provision of services in the district.

Councillor Davies was not present to explain his ideas (it subsequently transpiring that he had been prevented from attending by public transport problems on the main rail network).

In the absence of Councillor Davies, members discussed their ideas for public engagement. A number of suggestions were put forward for ways in which the Council could interact effectively with the community. This was in the context of obvious difficulties with the operation of area forums widely perceived as lacking in general interest and irrelevant to the provision of services to the public. There was a particular need to communicate effectively with parish councils.

There was now a need for analysis of what had gone wrong and why, and for an examination of alternative more effective methods of communicating. The expectation was that Councillor Davies would put together a paper for circulation. The Chief Executive said that a piece of work had already been undertaken by senior managers and this could be used as the basis for a new plan to be considered by the member task group set up to support Councillor Davies.

The Chief Executive agreed to put together a form of words for use in the paper to be prepared and would then speak to Councillor Davies.

After further discussion, it was AGREED to ask Councillors Dean, Light and Parry to join a group of members to be chaired by Councillor Davies to establish their own terms of reference, within the framework of what the Council had already requested, and to report back to the Constitution Working Group with a set of recommendations for establishing a better structure for communicating with the public and with parish councils by the end of October 2015.

CWG4

#### **CRITERIA FOR THE NOMINATION OF HONORARY ALDERMEN**

The Leader had asked the Working Group to consider tightening the definition of the process for nominating and appointing honorary aldermen. This had arisen following his nomination of former councillors J Ketteridge and Menell at the most recent Council meeting. A number of members had not supported one of the nominations put forward.

The Chief Executive explained the existing criteria and expressed the view that the correct procedure, as agreed by the Council in December 2010, had not been followed as this had presupposed a process of consultation between the Chairman and all group leaders before any nominations made were put to a vote.

The process for nominating and approving aldermen had never been formalised in the sense of being incorporated into the Constitution. The Chief Executive suggested this omission should now be rectified.

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal confirmed that the vote taken at Council on 26 May had been valid.

Consideration was given to the procedures operated elsewhere and whether these had any bearing on those in place at Uttlesford.

Members asked the Chief Executive to draft a set of rules to be presented at the July Council meeting to then be incorporated into the Articles of the Constitution. The rules would be laid on the table at the July meeting and adopted at the following meeting. He was also asked to research the cost of awarding civic badges to those nominated.

The rules would be drawn up on the following basis:

- The title of alderman may be conferred on any member having served at least 20 years or having performed exceptional service for a lesser period.
- The member will have either stood down or been defeated at an election and not expected to stand for election again.
- Candidates for the position of alderman may be nominated by any member.

- Nominations are to be made either directly to the Chairman of the Council or through the relevant group leader.
- The Chairman will consult all group leaders on any nomination received before deciding whether the nomination should go forward to Full Council for consideration.

It was AGREED that a report be prepared for Full Council proposing wording for an Article of the Constitution setting out the rules for the nomination and acceptance of the position of alderman.

The meeting ended 7.45pm