

General Purposes Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katherine Street, Croydon, CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Amy Foster (Chair);
Councillor Appu Srinivasan (Vice-Chair);
Councillor Stuart Collins, Samir Dwesar, Lara Fish, Tony Pearson and
Ellily Ponnuthurai

Apologies: Councillor Joseph Lee

PART A

12/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Joseph Lee gave apologies for this meeting.

13/22 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

14/22 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23 January 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

15/22 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business for the committee to consider.

16/22 **Constitution Review - Part 4A, Council Procedure Rules**

Deputy Monitoring Officer, Looqman Desai, and interim Head of Democratic Services, Adrian May, presented the report to members, and explained that since the report had been published the Constitution Working Group (CWG) had been due to meet, but that that meeting had been cancelled. The Chair explained that it was hoped the General Purposes Committee would give the CWG a final opportunity to review the proposed changes and authorise the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair to then make any further amendments before the revised Council Procedure Rules were presented to Council for adoption.

Members in particular discussed the issues set out in the table at paragraph 5.1 and agreed all the proposals in principle, save for the comments noted below.

The Chair mentioned that the committee may wish to reflect on the benefit of including Deputations, on which the CWG had not reached a consensus, and it was suggested that the change to the process for receiving petitions could satisfy the need for more public engagement.

It was noted that the tracking of Debate Motions needed more consideration by the CWG.

It was also noted that the Constitution was a working document, and that the changes around public engagement, which could include Deputations, would be reviewed in future and finetuned if there was room for improvement.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 To review and comment on the proposed revisions to the Constitution as detailed in the report;
- 2.2 To request that the amended version of the Council Procedure Rules at Part 4A of the Constitution (as set out in Appendix A) be further reviewed by the CWG;
- 2.3 To consider the need and options for tracking Debate Motions;
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the committee, to make any further amendments to the Council Procedure Rules; and,
- 2.5 To note that the Council Procedure Rules will be reported to Council for adoption.

17/22

Scheme of Members' Allowances 2022-23 - Annual Increase

The interim Head of Democratic Services explained to members that, given the financial context of the council, the political groups had informed officers that they would not support the proposed increase to members' allowances.

Members agreed that when the council was in a better financial position they could think about increasing allowances, but that they did not think this was an appropriate time to accept the recommendations. Members appreciated that the Allowance Scheme encouraged and supported people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds to become councillors, ensuring that there was diversity among the elected representatives of the Borough; but also expressed concern that it would be sending the wrong message to the public to increase allowances at this time.

RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Council that the increase of 4.04% to the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances for 2022/23 and backdating of allowance payments from April 2022 is not taken, and that the amounts set in the current Scheme continue to be effective; and,
2. To recommend to Council that the Director of Legal Services be authorised to make the necessary updates to the Constitution.

18/22

Members Scheme of Allowances 23-24

It was explained to members that if they did not agree to the recommendations in the previous report (Scheme of Members' Allowances 2022-23 – Annual increase) then the Scheme for the financial year 2023-24 would be materially the same as what was currently in place.

It was clarified that the appendix attached to the report was incorrect, and that the Scheme that would be in place was that which was agreed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2022, which stipulated that there could be up to five positions for Deputy Cabinet Members with an allowance of £5,491.36 each.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree to recommend to Council the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24 with materially the same terms as the 2022/23 scheme;
2. To agree that Council authorises the Director of Legal Services to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the 2023/24 Members' Allowances Scheme and make all necessary updates to the Constitution; and,

3. Note that the committee will review and bring proposals to Council with regards to the Basic and Special Responsibilities Allowance and other allowances, such as carer responsibilities, travel, maternity/paternity, and Subsistence, following the publication of the next report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on 'The Remuneration of Councillors in London', anticipated for late 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm