
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held Via Skype on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Mike Dendor, Alastair Gould (Chairman), Ann Hampshire, Benjamin Martin, Pete Neal, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders and Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman).

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Clifford, Jo Millard and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Councillor Roger Truelove - Leader, Steve Davey, Tim Gibson, James Hunt, Elliott Jayes, Lee McCall and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGY: Councillor Sarah Stephen.

187 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 September 2020 (Minute Nos. 103 - 106) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

188 INTRODUCTION

The Chairman explained that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Policy and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

In welcoming all Members and members of the public, the Chairman explained which Swale Borough Council officers were in attendance.

189 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

190 INTRODUCTION OF CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report and said that the proposal to introduce Cabinet Advisory Committees was to encourage more Member involvement in decision-making. He said that it could be the first step towards an all-out Committee system and would enable Members from across the Borough to make contributions. He welcomed Members' suggestions and comments and referred to the bullet points at paragraph 3.11 on page 5 of the report as potential discussion points. The Monitoring Officer added that the Cabinet Advisory Committees would be similar to the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) and Members might wish to consider what had worked well in that Committee and carry that forward.

In the debate that followed, Members raised points including:

- Were the pairings of meetings suggested in the report the best fit?;
- some portfolios needed their own committee;
- would the meetings be public?;
- what was the role of the Deputy Cabinet Member?;
- there was a conflict if a Cabinet Member sat on the Committee;
- should the committees be politically-balanced?;
- needed to consider the impact on staff resource with even more Committees;
- the work of the PDRC went wider than the Cabinet Advisory Committees might;
- were SBC moving to the Committee system as this was 'mix and match?'.
• this was a good opportunity to increase decision-making for all Members;
- there were lots of complexities to work out and suggested a Working Group;
- rather than remove PDRC and introduce Cabinet Advisory Committees, suggested increasing the membership on PDRC;
- quarterly meetings might not work for all topics;
- what was the time scale for considering the set up of the meetings?;
- needed to consider the balance of topics on each agenda;
- was PDRC needed in addition to Cabinet Advisory Committees?; and
- would the chairman of each Cabinet Advisory Committee be allocated a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)?.

Members discussed which pairings of portfolios went well together and whether some portfolio areas might need their own Committee.

In response to the issues raised, the Cabinet Member for Planning said there were pros and cons for PDRC, and for Cabinet Advisory Committees and he said that at other authorities, some Cabinet Members were Chairman or attended the Cabinet Advisory Committee meetings. He added that when the Constitution Review was discussed in June 2019, many Members were in favour of a hybrid Committee structure and this was a stepping stone to the Committee system as many Councillors were new and inexperienced. The Cabinet Member for Planning said that policies would be discussed earlier in the process and there would be more input from back benchers. He confirmed the meetings would be public meetings and said that each Chairman should receive an SRA. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Committees would be established as a politically-balanced committee and advised on the process and timeline of the proposal of the Cabinet Advisory Committees, to be considered by Full Council, early in 2021.

Councillor Mike Dendor proposed the setting up of a Working Group to discuss the detail and viability of the Cabinet Advisory Committees. This was seconded by Councillor Lloyd Bowen and on being put to the vote, Members agreed.

The Chairman proposed that, should the Cabinet Advisory Committees be established, they should be politically-balanced. This was seconded by Councillor Ben A Martin and on being put to the vote, Members agreed.

Councillor Mike Dendor proposed that the Chairman of each Cabinet Advisory Committee should be a non-Cabinet or Deputy Cabinet Member. This was

seconded by Councillor Lloyd Bowen and on being put to the vote, Members agreed.

There was a discussion on the set up of the Working Group and the Policy Officer offered his assistance. The following Members volunteered to be a part of the working group:

Councillors Mike Dendor, Ben A Martin, Julian Saunders, Ken Rowles, Ghlin Whelan, Tim Gibson, Elliott Jayes and Steve Davey.

Councillor Mike Dendor proposed the list of volunteers to sit on the Working Group. This was seconded by Councillor Ken Rowles and on being put to the vote, Members agreed.

It was agreed that the Working Group would provide an update to a future meeting.

Recommendations:

(1) That, if established, the Cabinet Advisory Committees be politically balanced.

(2) That, if established, the Chairman of each Cabinet Advisory Committee be a non-Cabinet or Deputy Cabinet Member.

(3) That a Working Group consisting of Councillors Mike Dendor, Ben A Martin, Julian Saunders, Ken Rowles, Ghlin Whelan, Tim Gibson, Elliott Jayes and Steve Davey be set up to consider the viability and detail of Cabinet Advisory Committees and to report back to a future PDRC meeting.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel