

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of General Purposes Committee

29 January 2007

at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor R D Burrett (Chair)

Councillor D English (Vice-Chair)

Councillors B K Blake, C A Cheshire, M T Head, R A Lanzer,
J Mortimer, D J Shreeves, and J G Smith

Also in Attendance:

Councillors D W Murdoch, G K Seekings and B A Smith

Officers Present:

P Tinsley
G Hydes

(Head of Democratic Services)
(Democratic Services Officer)

Apology for Absence:

Councillor D G Crow

18. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. Members' Disclosure of Interest

No disclosures of interest were made by Members.

20. Audit and Governance Sub Committee

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Audit and Governance Sub Committee held on 4 December 2006 and 15 January 2007 and set out in Appendices B and C to these minutes be received. With regard to the minutes of the meeting held on 4

December 2006, it was noted that the meeting had finished at 6.40pm not 7.40pm as stated therein.

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21. Appointment of Mayor – Proposed Points System

Members were reminded that the Committee at its last meeting held on 27 November [2006](#) considered Councillor G Seekings' proposal that a points system be established for determining which political group should nominate the Mayor each year (minute 16 refers).

The Head of Democratic Services advised the Committee that whilst it would be possible for the Council to have a protocol providing guidance to Members, it would not be lawful to enshrine in the Council's Constitution, any procedure that would fetter the discretion of the Council to appoint whoever the majority of Members present and voting at the Annual Meeting wished to appoint.

The Committee at its last meeting had concluded that it would not be appropriate to operate such a protocol in circumstances where one political group had overall control but with a very slim majority. The Committee had therefore asked the Head of Democratic Services to refer to this meeting a draft points based protocol to be used in circumstances where either there was no overall control or where the majority party had 21 or more seats (with the presumption that in all other circumstances the Mayor should be appointed on the nomination of the majority group and the Deputy Mayor on the nomination of the opposition).

Members considered a spread sheet (attached as Enclosure D to the agenda) which illustrated how the proposed points system would ensure that the Mayoralty rotated on a proportional basis.

The proposed protocol was as follows:-

Each group started with one point for each Member of the Group immediately prior to the election. Then, 37 points (being equivalent to the number of Councillors) were deducted from the Group who nominated the present Mayor. Finally each group had added to its total the number of Members it had after the election (or the same number again if the starting point was a non-election year). The group with the most points then nominated the Mayor for the next Municipal Year. The process would be repeated in subsequent years, but the starting point would be the number of points carried over from the previous year.

It was proposed that this system be used only in the situation of no overall control or where the majority party had 21 or more seats. If the Council returned to a situation of overall control with a slim majority, the protocol would not operate. If the position changed again either to no overall control or the majority group holding 21 seats or more, then the system would resume from the starting point of one point for each Member of the group immediately prior to the election. The system, if agreed by the Council, could be treated only as guidance to Members in the selection of the Mayor. The Committee noted that the Members present and voting at the Annual Meeting of the Council would retain the discretion to appoint whoever they wished as Mayor.

The Committee discussed the proposed protocol and a range of views about the advantages and disadvantages were expressed. After a detailed discussion it was

[Moved by Councillor Cheshire and seconded by Councillor Lanzer –](#)

Comment: Glyn I didn't have a note of the mover and seconder but this is my recollection – do you agree?

That the Head of Democratic Services be asked to consult with the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors as to whether any other authorities deal with the election of Mayor by a free vote on a secret ballot and / or have an agreement that the Mayor will not use the casting vote

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This was put to the vote but was defeated.

Comment: None - but I can't work out how to delete the comment box!!!!

It was then moved by Councillor Mortimer, seconded by Councillor Blake and

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the adoption of a protocol be not recommended.

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22. Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Freemen

The Committee considered report DS/68 of the Head of Democratic Services and Vice – Chair of the Executive on the proposed protocol for determining on whom the title of Honorary Aldermen or Honorary Freemen should be conferred.

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The Committee was informed that there had been informal discussions over the past few years (at the Members' Facilities Working Group, the Leaders Briefing; and also at an Executive Briefing meeting) about the possibility of formalising a mechanism for honouring those who had given exceptional service to the local community. The Council could appoint Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Freemen as a way of honouring people who had given exceptional service to the Borough. In the case of Honorary Alderman that service must be as a past Member of the Council.

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Paragraph 4 of the report before the Committee, suggested what should be taken into account when deciding to nominate a person for either title. Nominees for Honorary Alderman should be former Councillors who had served in that capacity for a significant time. Rather than define a specific period of service it was suggested that the length of service would normally be substantially greater than the average length of service per Councillor at that time. Nominees should also have given service to the wider community in a role outside of their duties as a Borough Councillor. That might include notable work with the Voluntary Sector, with Educational Bodies, with other Local Authorities covering the geographical areas of the Borough, or any other body that the Council deemed appropriate. Nominees for Honorary Freeman should be either individuals that had given extraordinary service to the town over a prolonged period, or who, by their action, had brought significant distinction to the town.

The Committee felt that it was important not to devalue the above honours by giving them too frequently. It was accepted that many people provided good service both to the town and to the Council. Members felt strongly that it should not be expected that retiring Councillors of many years service would automatically receive an honour, it was important that only exceptional service was rewarded.

It was agreed that if anyone considered that a particular individual should be considered for either honour, they should approach the Head of Democratic Services who would then consult with the Mayor (as a matter of courtesy only) and the Leaders of each of the political groups. If the Head of Democratic Services was satisfied that the person nominated was likely to receive the support of the whole Council, he/she would report the matter to this Committee who would be expected to recommend that the Mayor convened an Extraordinary meeting of the Council for that purpose. The Head of Democratic Services would then approach the nominated person to ensure that he/she would like to receive such an honour, before any formal arrangements

were made. It was imperative that any nomination, received the full support of all Members at the Extraordinary meeting of the Council.

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Council be recommended to agree that the criteria and procedure set out in paragraph 4 of the report be followed (and as set out above), when considering whether or not to confer the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Freeman on appropriate individuals.

23. Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.37 pm.

R D BURRETT
Chair

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