

# Crawley Borough Council

## Minutes of General Purposes Committee

28 January 2014 at 7.00pm

### Present:

Councillor	L A M Burke (Chair)
Councillor	C A Cheshire (Vice–Chair)
Councillors	M L Ayling, R D Burrett, D G Crow, C R Eade, P K Lamb, R A Lanzer, C A Moffatt, C G Oxlade and L A Walker

### Officers Present:

Ann-Maria Brown	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Steve Lappage	Democratic Services Manager
Mez Matthews	Democratic Services Officer
Dave Rawlings	Head of Finance, Revenue and Benefits

### 16. Members' Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures of interests were made by Members.

### 17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### Page Numbers

The Committee was informed that the last page number of the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 was 10 and the first page number of the next minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2013 was 61. The Committee noted that page numbers 11 to 60 had been mistakenly omitted.

### 18. Changes to the Constitution (Executive) Decision Making Redesign: Update

The Committee considered report LDS/077 of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on the draft executive decision making officers' operational online toolkit and associated documents requested at the previous meeting of the Committee (Minute 14 refers). The report also sought approval of changes to the Constitution to take effect from 1 April 2014 to rationalise and help streamline the authority's executive decision making arrangements.

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting on 27 November 2013 the Committee had been in favour of the principles behind the redesign as it would streamline decision making, but that some Members had expressed concerns. The Committee's attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of report which provided a fuller response and updates on those concerns.

All Members had been sent a link to the draft version of the *Officers' Toolkit for Executive Decision Making* which had been made available on the intranet. The Democratic Services Manager showed the online toolkit to the Committee and the following key points were noted:

- Although the toolkit had ultimately been developed for officers' use, the information it contained might also be useful to Councillors;
- The definition of a key decision was more detailed than at present;
- The revised key decision thresholds were clearer and more comprehensive than at present which should ensure that decisions were taken at the correct level;
- Timing calculators had been devised which would provide officers with an indicative timescale on when key tasks needed to be carried out in relation to a delegated decision;
- Clear distinction had been made between administrative decisions and significant operations decisions;
- The need for officers to consider Member involvement or consultation in decision making was reinforced throughout the toolkit;
- Clear guidance had been provided for report writing.

The Democratic Services Manager advised the Committee that a brief protocol which summarised the information and guidance contained within the toolkit would also be produced, and that training would be provided for officers before the new arrangements were rolled-in. The Committee was reminded that the Democratic Services Team would also be available to assist and guide officers and Councillors.

It was noted that the proposed changes to the Leader and Cabinet Procedure Rules (Page 268 of the Constitution) included within Appendix 2 to the report contained a clerical error. It was therefore agreed that the third bullet point of paragraph 3.2 in relation to those changes be amended to read: "of minimal political~~ly~~ sensitivity ..."

A Committee member queried why reference had been made to savings within bullet point (c) of the key decision definition (Appendix 2a to the report). Following discussion, it was agreed that examples of where savings (as opposed to underspends) on capital expenditure would be relevant be looked at before considering whether or not the wording contained within bullet point (c) needed to be amended.

As the retirement of the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits had recently been announced it was agreed that reference made to the "Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits" within Recommendation 2.2 regarding relevant changes of the Procurement Code be replaced to read "Section 151 Officer".

The Committee commended and thanked both the Democratic Services Manager (Steve Lappage) and the Democratic Services Officer (Chris Pedlow) who had produced the toolkit. The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that he would be happy to explain the toolkit to any Member on an individual basis who requested it.

## RESOLVED

That the Full Council be recommended:

1. That the amendments to the Constitution proposed in Appendices 2-4 of report LDS/077 be agreed and come into effect from 1 April 2014 subject to the following amendments:
  - (i) That the third bullet point of paragraph 3.2 of the Constitutional changes in relation to the Leader and Cabinet Procedure Rules (Appendix 2, Page B12 of the report) be amended to read: "of minimal political~~ly~~ sensitivity – more politically sensitive matters are likely to go to Cabinet for decision"
  - (ii) That, subject to consideration of the examples of where savings would arise from capital expenditure, paragraph 12.3(a)(1)(i)(c) (Appendix 2a, Page B16 of the report) be either retained as it is or amended to read: "in the case of capital expenditure, any projects if they involve entering into new commitments ~~and/or making savings~~ in excess of £500,000;"

(NOTE by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits: Following discussion with the Chair of the General Purposes Committee the Full Council is advised that the wording "and/or making savings" is not necessary and it is therefore suggested that this wording be deleted from Paragraph 12.3(a)(1)(i)(c)).
2. That the Section 151 Officer put in place the relevant changes to the Procurement Code to reflect the other recommended changes to the Key Decision Levels and Financial Procedure Rules, and that these be approved for inclusion in the Constitution by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

## 19. Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.25pm.

L A M BURKE  
Chair