

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Governance Committee

18 January 2016 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor	J Stanley (Chair)
Councillor	R D Burrett (Vice-Chair)
Councillors	M L Ayling, D G Crow, C R Eade, M G Jones, P K Lamb, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, K McCarthy and A C Skudder

Officers Present:

Ann-Maria Brown	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Mez Matthews	Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Oakley	Electoral Services Manager

16. Members' Disclosure of Interests

The following disclosures of interests were made by Members:-

Member	Minute Number	Subject	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R D Burrett	Minute 18	West Sussex County Council Electoral Boundary Review	Personal Interest as he was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor D G Crow	Minute 18	West Sussex County Council Electoral Boundary Review	Personal Interest as he was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor M G Jones	Minute 18	West Sussex County Council Electoral Boundary Review	Personal Interest as he was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor P K Lamb	Minute 18	West Sussex County Council Electoral Boundary Review	Personal Interest as he was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor	Minute 18	West Sussex	Personal Interest as

Member	Minute Number	Subject	Type and Nature of Disclosure
R A Lanzer		County Council Electoral Boundary Review	he was a West Sussex County Councillor

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on [28 September 2015](#) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18. West Sussex County Council Electoral Boundary Review

The Committee considered report [LDS/111](#) of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed the Committee of the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for division boundaries of West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The Committee was requested to consider whether it supported the Commission's draft recommendations as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Several members of the Committee were concerned that the Scheme did not appear to support the Boundary Commission's priority of electoral equality, with certain wards identified as having a variance of +10% in 2021 whilst others would have a variance of -8%. Other members of the Committee were of the view that although the variance was high for some wards, it was difficult to address as any alternative could create an unsuitably shaped division. It was also noted that 10% variance was within the tolerance set by the Boundary Commission.

Some disappointment was expressed that the Boundary Commission had used the railway line to separate some divisions even though the railway had several crossings and other divisions had been combined which were also separated by a railway line.

The Committee was informed that the County Council's Electoral Review Panel had submitted a revised version of the Scheme to the Boundary Commission, which took account of some of the issues which had been raised by Crawley Borough Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Lamb and seconded by Councillor Lunnon that the Committee support the scheme for WSCC divisions as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Councillor Ayling was not present at this point in the meeting and therefore did not take part in the vote.

At the request of Councillor Crow, and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 24.5, the names of the Members voting for and against the proposal to support the draft recommendations for a scheme for WSCC divisions for Crawley as set out in Appendix A to the report were recorded as set out below:

For the Proposal:

Councillors M G Jones, P K Lamb, T Lunnon, A C Skudder and J Stanley (5).

Against the Proposal:

Councillors R D Burrett, D G Crow, C R Eade, R A Lanzer and K McCarthy (5).

Abstentions:

None.

With the vote being 5 for the proposal and 5 against the proposal the Chair used his casting vote, which was for the proposal.

The proposal was therefore CARRIED, and it was

RESOLVED

That the draft recommendations for the scheme for West Sussex County Council divisions for Crawley be supported as set out in Appendix A to report [LDS/111](#).

19. Individual Electoral Registration: Update

The Committee considered report [LDS/112](#) of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which updated the Committee on the annual canvass for the electoral register and the end of transition to individual electoral registration in Crawley. The Electoral Services Manager informed the Committee that the most up to date register identified approximately 76,500 electors with approximately 5,500 new names pending.

Several Committee members were surprised that 36% of households received a personal visit and were concerned about the level of expense incurred. The Electoral Services Manager explained that it was a legal requirement to carry out the visits and stated that they had cost approximately £28,000 in the past year. The number of households requiring a visit had been slightly higher this year compared to previous years, although that difference was not significant. The Committee was advised that the visits had proven a successful way to increase the response rate.

Following questions from the Committee, the Electoral Services Manager advised that the postage costs relating to invitations to register and reminders were fully funded by the Government. The new registration form required electors to state their previous address, this should help to ensure that electors were only registered at one address. Information was shared between Electoral Services and the Council Tax Department which helped identify new electors. Electoral Services also received information from the Registrar regarding recent deaths within the Borough and the surrounding area.

RESOLVED

That the progress made in the transition to Individual Electoral Registration and the steps taken to maximise registration be noted.

20. Establishment of a Constitution Review Working Group

The Committee was requested to establish a Constitution Review Working Group to consider ways to simplify and improve the Council Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution). The establishment of a Working Group had been suggested following concern that some procedures were difficult to understand and it had been proposed that the Rules could be improved to assist the smooth and effective running of Council meetings.

The Committee noted that the Council Procedure Rules related to meetings of the Full Council as well as Committees and Sub Committees of the Council where specified. It was agreed that the first meeting of the Working Group would take place at 6pm on the 3 February 2016, with the second meeting at 10am on the 18 February 2016.

It was proposed that all Councillors be invited to suggest ways of improving the Council Procedure Rules. The Committee identified the following areas of the Rules as requiring improvement:

- the term “that the question be now put” as it was currently confusing;
- “amendments to motions” as the process was currently time consuming and confusing;
- the term “substantive” as it caused confusion;
- the Rules needed to use words which were easily understood.

RESOLVED

1. That a Constitution Review Working Group of Members of the Governance Committee be established to:
 - a) To consider ways to simplify and improve the Council Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution)
 - b) To submit recommendations for consideration at the next meeting of the Governance Committee to be held on 14 March 2016.
2. That the members of the Working Group be Councillors M L Ayling, R D Burrett, D G Crow, P K Lamb and J Stanley (substitute members: Councillors M G Jones and R A Lanzer).
3. That the Chair of the Working Group be Councillor D G Crow.

21. Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

J STANLEY
Chair