

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Governance Committee

Tuesday, 26 January 2021 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

R D Burrett (Chair)

T Lunnon (Vice-Chair)

D Crow, C R Eade, M G Jones, P K Lamb, R A Lanzer, S Malik, K McCarthy and
C J Mullins

Officers Present:

Natalie Brahma-Pearl Chief Executive

Mez Matthews Democratic Services Officer

Andrew Oakley Electoral Services Manager

Chris Pedlow Democratic Services Manager

Jess Tamplin Democratic Services Support Officer

1. Disclosures of Interest

The following disclosures of interests were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor Crow	Agenda Item 6 Allocation of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs (Minute 5)	Personal Interest – Member of West Sussex County Council

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 17 November 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No written questions had been submitted by members of the public.

4. Final Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2021/22 and 2022/23)

The Committee considered report [LDS/163](#) of the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The Democratic Services Support Officer introduced the

report to the Committee, which summarised the final report of the IRP and set out the legal framework for setting councillors' allowance rates. The Committee heard that the IRP had given thoughtful consideration to a wide range of information when making its independent recommendations regarding the Councillors' Allowances Scheme, as detailed in the final report. The Committee's attention was drawn to the revised version of Schedule 1 of the Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2021/22 and 2022/23 which replaced page 21 of the Agenda Pack and had been issued as a [Supplementary Agenda](#).

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

At the suggestion of the Chair the Committee first considered recommendations A to H of the final report of the IRP which related to the basic allowance for all councillors and special responsibility allowances. Committee members expressed general support for the recommendations, and conveyed their thanks to the members of the IRP and the officers involved. The Committee considered it important that the recommendations relating to allowances were made by a body independent from the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Burrett and seconded by Councillor Lunnon that recommendations A to H of the IRP's final report be agreed.

A recorded vote was then taken on the proposal in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal:

Councillors Burrett, Crow, Eade, Jones, Lamb, Lanzer, Lunnon, Malik, McCarthy, and Mullins (10).

Against the proposal:

None (0).

Abstentions:

None (0).

The motion was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

Mayor's Allowance and Deputy Mayor's Allowance

The Committee then considered recommendations I and J of the final report of the IRP which related specifically to the allowances of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In response to a question from a Committee member, officers confirmed that the IRP had given regard to the survey answers provided by councillors regarding the Mayoral allowances and had assessed other borough councils' Mayoral allowances via the 2019 South East Employers survey. It was heard that the IRP did not feel best-placed to make a recommendation based on that information and had therefore requested councillors' expertise, via the Governance Committee, to agree to what extent, if any, the Mayoral allowance should be reduced by.

Committee members expressed concern about councillors taking responsibility for setting the exact allowance rates for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor; the Committee preferred that the recommendations be made by a body independent from the Council. Suggestions were made regarding further evidence to be presented to the IRP.

It was proposed by Councillor Lanzer and seconded by Councillor Eade that the IRP be asked to reconsider the allowances for both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor and provide a recommendation to the Governance Committee (and in turn the Full Council) for an exact figure for each. It was clarified that the two allowances would remain at the current rate until any new rate had been agreed by the Full Council.

A recorded vote was then taken on the proposal in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal:

Councillors Burrett, Crow, Eade, Jones, Lamb, Lanzer, Lunnon, Malik, and McCarthy (9).

Against the proposal:

Councillor Mullins (1).

Abstentions:

None (0).

The motion was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Independent Remuneration Panel be asked to reconsider recommendations I and J of its final report (as set out in report [LDS/163](#)), and to recommend to the Governance Committee and in turn the Full Council an amount of allowance for the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
- 2) That the Full Council be recommended to approve:
 - a) Recommendations A to H of the Independent Remuneration Panel's final report as set out in report [LDS/163](#).
 - b) The Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22 and 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A to these minutes.
 - c) That the allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor remain set at the current rate (namely £11,548 for the Mayor and £1,800 for the Deputy Mayor respectively) until such time as a further report of the Independent Remuneration Panel is brought back for consideration to the Full Council on the matter.

5. Allocation of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs

The Committee considered report [LDS/162](#) of the Interim Monitoring Officer. The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report, which set out potential options for a more proportionate and sustainable system for the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the Council's Committees. This had been proposed in light of the current Joint Agreement between the two political groups.

The Committee considered it necessary to change the current approach for allocating Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, which it deemed contentious, and adopt a clearer

system. Comments made regarding each of the options set out in the report were as follows:

Fixed Cascade Approach

- A greater number of Chairs/Vice-Chairs would be allocated to the opposition group than by the strict proportional approach.
- The approach allowed for greater scrutiny of the leading party and for cross-party checks on decision-making processes.
- If the opposition party were to hold 18 seats, the allocated Chairs would give balance to the leading group's control of the Cabinet (and likely the Mayoralty).

Strict Proportional Approach

- The proportionality of this approach would be more representative of the electorate's wishes (according to local election outcomes) than the fixed cascade approach.
- The approach was identified as being used by the UK Parliament.
- Specific Committee Chairs would not be allocated. Some Committee members felt that to be too open to ambiguity, whilst other Committee members considered it advantageous as it would enable positions to be filled by the best-suited councillors.

Councillor Crow presented the following amended version of the Fixed Cascade Approach to the Committee.

Largest Opposition Group (number of seats held)	OSC	Audit	Governance	Planning	Licensing
3	VC	VC			
6	C	VC			
9	C	VC	VC	VC	
12	C	C	VC	VC	VC
15	C	C	VC	C	VC
18*	C	C	C	C	C

* Non-Administration Party

Councillor Crow advocated that the amended version above would allocate Chairs/Vice-Chairs in a way that encouraged both cross-party working and scrutiny by the opposition. It was proposed by Councillor Crow and seconded by Councillor Lanzer that the Full Council be recommended to adopt the Fixed Cascade Approach with the positions allocated as set out in the table above.

A recorded vote was then taken on the proposal in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal:

Councillors Burrett, Crow, Eade, Lanzer, and McCarthy (5).

Against the proposal:

Councillors Jones, Lamb, Lunnon, Malik, and Mullins (5).

Abstentions:
None (0).

As a result of the tied vote, the Chair used the casting vote to vote FOR the proposal. There were therefore six votes for the proposal and five votes against. The motion was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Full Council be recommended to adopt the following Fixed Cascade Approach for the allocation of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

Largest Opposition Group (number of seats held)	OSC	Audit	Governance	Planning	Licensing
3	VC	VC			
6	C	VC			
9	C	VC	VC	VC	
12	C	C	VC	VC	VC
15	C	C	VC	C	VC
18*	C	C	C	C	C

* Non-Administration Party

- 2) That the Full Council be requested to amend the Constitution to reflect the adopted protocol regarding the allocation of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

6. Polling Arrangements May 2021

The Committee considered report [CEX/54](#) of the Chief Executive. The Electoral Services Manager introduced the report to the Committee, which set out proposed changes to the polling arrangements for the May 2021 elections in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. It was proposed that the reduction in the number of polling places from 27 to 23 would mitigate the problem of a projected shortfall in experienced Senior Presiding Officers, and would ensure that no schools would be used as polling places.

General Issues

The Committee asked that its thanks to Electoral Services staff be recorded for their work on complex matters under exceptional circumstances. Committee members discussed the Government's aim to proceed with the May 2021 elections and expressed worries in relation to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. Concerns were raised regarding the loss of polling places and the impact this may have on voter turnout. It was heard that the Council would ensure COVID-safe precautions would be taken if the elections were to go ahead, but that preparations also needed to be made for the eventuality of cancellation of the elections.

It was proposed by Councillor Crow and seconded by Councillor Lamb that the Council's Chief Executive, as Returning Officer, be asked to write to the Government to convey the Committee's request that the elections be postponed to a later date due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

A recorded vote was taken on the proposal in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal:

Councillors Burrett, Crow, Eade, Jones, Lamb, Lanzer, Lunnon, Malik, McCarthy, and Mullins (10).

Against the proposal:

None (0).

Abstentions:

None (0).

The motion was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

To assist in the Committee's consideration of the recommended changes in polling places, the Chair advised that he intended to split the discussion based on the polling places set out in sections 5.7 and 5.9 of the report.

Broadfield Scout Hut and Creasys Drive Adventure Playground

Committee members discussed the proposal to change the polling places for polling districts LAB (part of Bewbush & North Broadfield Ward), LBB (part of Broadfield Ward), and LEB (part of Gossops Green & North East Broadfield Ward) to one combined polling place, the Broadfield Community Centre. The impact on queueing time, the flow of voters moving through the building, and turnout were discussed. A ward member for Broadfield expressed concerns regarding the entrance/exit points and that the proposals may cause confusion for voters. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that measures for controlling the flow of voters were being explored. The main reason for this proposal was the projected staff shortages.

The Grattons Indoor Bowls Club

It was recognised that moving the polling place for polling district LJA (part of Pound Hill North & Forge Wood Ward) from the Bowls Club to Milton Mount Community Centre was necessary at present, however ward members for Pound Hill North and Forge Wood requested that this be a temporary measure for the 2021 elections only.

The Mill Primary School

It was noted that the electorate for polling districts LFB (part of Ifield Ward) and LFD (part of Ifield Ward) was relatively small, and it was proposed that those electorates would be split between two existing polling places; the Ifield Community Centre and Ifield West Community Centre.

The Brook School

Committee members were conscious that the journey time for some voters within polling district LHB (part of Maidenbower Ward) would potentially increase should

their polling place be temporarily changed from The Brook School to Maidenbower Community Centre. The Committee heard that this was proposed as a temporary measure.

Forge Wood Primary School

A ward member for Pound Hill North and Forge Wood (polling district LJC) expressed concerns about the proposed polling place of Wakehams Green Community Centre but recognised the importance of avoiding the use of schools as polling places, as well as the lack of any other suitable public buildings in the Forge Wood area. It was noted that a community centre was due to be built in the area which was intended to be used as a future polling place.

Use of Schools as Polling Stations

Committee members discussed the difficulties of using schools as polling places during the Coronavirus pandemic due to the cleaning required and the disruption to education. Committee members suggested that it may instead be possible to use marquees as temporary polling places. These would allow voters to retain proximity to their current polling place as well as providing good ventilation and thus helping to be COVID-secure. The Electoral Services Manager stated that this proposal would have to take into consideration extra costs, the shortfall of staff, lighting, and possible bad weather.

Amendment

It was proposed by Councillor Lamb and seconded by Councillor Jones that the Returning Officer and the Electoral Services Team be asked to investigate the possibility of providing alternative accommodation (such as marquees) as polling places on, or near to, the premises of the three current school polling places and that, where it proves unfeasible to provide such alternative accommodation, the temporary polling place/s set out in paragraph 5.9 of report [CEX/54](#) be used.

A recorded vote was taken on the proposal in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the proposal, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the proposal:

Councillors Burrett, Jones, Lamb, Lanzer, Malik, McCarthy, and Mullins (7).

Against the proposal:

Councillors Crow, Eade, and Lunnon (3).

Abstentions:

None (0).

The amendment was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

A recorded vote was then taken on the recommendations set out in report CEX/54 (as amended) in accordance with the Council's Virtual Committee Procedure Rules. The names of the councillors voting for and against the recommendations, along with any abstentions, were recorded as follows:

For the recommendations:

Councillors Burrett, Crow, Eade, Lanzer, and McCarthy (5).

Against the recommendations:

Councillors Jones, Lamb, Lunnon, Malik, and Mullins (5).

Abstentions:

None (0).

As a result of the tied vote, the Chair used the casting vote to vote FOR the proposal. There were therefore six votes for the proposal and five votes against. The motion was therefore declared to be CARRIED.

RESOLVED

1. That the Full Council be recommended to approve the temporary Polling Scheme set out in Appendix B to these minutes for the May 2021 elections, subject to the Returning Officer and Electoral Services staff's investigation concluding that it is feasible (within the constraints of the budget) to provide alternative accommodation as polling places on, or near to, the school premises of the existing polling places of The Mill Primary School, The Brook School, and Forge Wood Primary School. Should it prove unfeasible to provide such alternative accommodation, that the Full Council be recommended to make the temporary change/s to the Polling Scheme for the May 2021 elections set out in paragraph 5.9 of report [CEX/54](#).
2. That authority is delegated to the Returning Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governance Committee, to make temporary changes to the Polling Scheme whilst the COVID-19 pandemic response is in effect.
3. That the Chief Executive, as Returning Officer, writes to the Government to convey the Committee's request that the elections be postponed to a later date due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

NOTE BY THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

Included as Appendix C to these minutes is a note from the Returning Officer following the request by the Governance Committee above to investigate the viability as to whether alternative accommodation could be arranged for Polling Places on, or near to, the three existing schools which were currently named as Polling Places.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Governance Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.41pm

**R D Burrett
(Chair)**