

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 at 1.00 pm by Video conference.

Present: Mr Peter Tucker (Chairman); Councillors J Bayford, Campbell, Crittenden, Dexter, Fellows, Kup, Quittenden (Minster Parish Council), Crow-Brown (Minster Parish Council), Patricia Causier (Independent Member of the Standards Committee), Peter Lorenzo (Independent Member of the Standards Committee) and Lee Wellbrook (Independent Member of the Standards Committee)

190. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Braidwood and Duckworth.

191. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

192. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

With an edit made that Mr Tucker be noted as present in the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020, they were proposed approved by himself, seconded by Cllr Campbell and agreed as a correct record by members.

193. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman presented his report.

- He welcomed three new Independent Members to the Standards Committee: Patricia Causia, Lee Wellbrook and Peter Lorenzo.
- Since taking post as Chairman, a couple of meetings have been dealt with according to council policy. He expressed thanks to the Officers who have supported that process.

194. REVIEW OF PETITION SCHEME

The Chairman outlined the CRWP recommendation to the Standards Committee, namely:

1. that the number of signatories required to debate at council should be reduced from the proposed 1500 to 1000.
2. That the number of signatories signing paper and e-petition should be added together when calculating the threshold reached, rather than them being reported separately.
3. That the appropriate Cabinet member is copied into the response to the petitioner when a petition doesn't reach the minimum threshold (under 50 signatories) and is treated as correspondence.

Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager, presented the report to the committee.

The committee then discussed the report and made the following points:

- Members raised concerns about the proposal to add together signatories on paper and e-petitions.
- Members asked whether Democratic Services currently check for duplicate signatures in submitted petitions. The Committee Services Manager confirmed that current resources doesn't allow for detailed cross-referencing of petitions.
- Councillors highlighted the need to provide accessible petition schemes and the importance of not disenfranchising those who don't have access to e-petitions.

It was proposed by Cllr Campbell and seconded by Cllr J Bayford, that:

1. Signatures from paper and e-petitions should not be added together when calculating thresholds.
2. The total number of signatories required to debate a petition at Council is reduced from the proposed 1500 to 1000 as recommended by the CRWP.

This was voted on by the members and the proposal was LOST.

It was proposed by Cllr Campbell, seconded by Cllr Crittenden and AGREED by members that:

1. Signatories of paper and e-petitions would be added together when calculating thresholds.
2. The total number of signatories required to debate a petition at Council remains at the proposed 1500.
3. The committee raised no other objections to the remaining proposed changes.

195. REVIEW OF QUESTIONS WORD LIMIT

The Chairman outlined the recommendation from CRWP, that being to increase the word limit for Full Council questions from members of the public and Councillors from 50 words to 150 words.

Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager, outlined the report to members.

Members sought clarification whether members of the public would still only be allowed to read their question, rather than make a speech in the 150 words. The Committee Services Manager confirmed that the public would only be allowed to read out their question.

It was proposed by Cllr Campbell, seconded by Cllr Crittenden and AGREED by members to recommend to Council to increase the word limit for Full Council questions from members of the public and Councillors from 50 words to 150 words.

196. USE OF NON-GENDER SPECIFIC TITLES IN THE CONSTITUTION

The Chairman outlined the recommendation from CRWP, that this report be put to the Standards Committee with a change to the title as follows: 'Removing from the constitution gender-specific titles'.

Estelle Culligan, Director of Law and Democracy, outlined the report to members.

It was proposed by Cllr Bayford, seconded by Cllr Crittenden and AGREED by members to recommend to Council the removal of gender-specific titles from the constitution.

197. STANDARDS COMPLAINT STATISTICS

Councillors notes the current standards complaint statistics.

Meeting concluded : 1.50 pm