

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2011 at 9.30 am in Rossetti Room, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Mr Robin Hills (Chairman); Councillors K Gregory, Hayton, Nicholson, Watkins and Wright

In Attendance Harvey Patterson and Nicholas Hughes

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Hinchley.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Hayton moved, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the minutes.

The Chairman then signed the minutes.

11. MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

The Chairman said that once Members of the Constitutional Review Working Party had agreed on a set of recommendations regarding the Member role description, those recommendations would have to be considered by the Standards Committee.

Mr Harvey Patterson, Corporate & Regulatory Services Manager said that the Chairman of the Constitutional Review Working Party had always been the Chairman of Standards Committee. He said that the role of the Leader of the main opposition was to offer constructive challenge. Mr Patterson said that the Leader of Council was of the view that currently there was no majority as there was no written down agreement for a coalition between the Conservative Group and the Independent Group. The reality was that there was a hung Council. He said that this situation required less opposition challenge and more cooperation. Mr Patterson said that it was up to the Members to reduce opposition challenge and upgrade consensus.

Some Members said that such an arrangement would prevent difficulties that were likely to be encountered at budget setting time. Other Members disagreed with the proposal to amend the Council Constitution to reflect more cooperation was needed. They said that consensus could still be reached by Parties agreeing the budget before the formal Council budget meeting. To avoid such difficulties members proposed that the Leader of Council and Leader of the Main Opposition would need to meet to discuss the budget before it was considered by Council. Members also suggested that under the Leader of Council's and the Main Opposition Leader's roles include the following description:

1. In the event of a hung Council, the Leader of Council and Opposition Leader should work together in a constructive manner.

Mr Patterson explained that the reality as regards political balance was that there was no clear majority and because of this it would be advisable for Members to consider including the issue of consensus in the job roles of Members for the key posts

concerned. Members said that the job title for the Leader of the Main Opposition should reflect the special responsibilities associated with the role.

Councillor Gregory moved, Councillor Watkins seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. That the following be added to the Chairman of Constitutional Review Working Party role description:
 - a) As an independent, non-elected member of the Council to be conversant with the protocols and practices of the Council insofar as they affect the conduct of elected District or Parish councillors who may be required to appear before the Committee or its Sub-Committees;
 - b) To liaise with the appropriate officers on reports;
2. That the title of the Leader of the Main Opposition should be Shadow Leader of Council;
3. Consequential changes to the document;
4. Subject to the agreed amendments, recommend the Member role descriptions to Standards Committee

Members expressed the view that it was imperative for all Councillors to work constructively for the good of the District.

Meeting concluded : 11.10 am