

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

MINUTES of the meeting of the CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY, which was open to the press and public, held on TUESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2007 at LEWISHAM TOWN HALL, CATFORD, SE6 4RU at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillor Hall (Chair); Councillor Walton (Vice Chair) Councillors Alexander, Flood, Griesenbeck, Morris, Peake and Stamirowski.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stockbridge and Wise.

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1	<u>MINUTES</u> (page RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Working Party held on 23 October 2006 be confirmed and signed.
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS</u> (page There were no declarations of interest.
3	<u>AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION</u> (page
3.1	Public Questions
3.1.1	Councillor Morris said that one of his constituents had not received a written reply to a Council Question that he had submitted. The clerk agreed to check that all public questions receive a written reply. It was also agreed that members of the public who were submitting a public question for the first time should receive a standard acknowledgement which outlines the Council's procedure for the public questions at a Council meeting.
3.1.2	It was also agreed that there could be an earlier deadline for submitting public questions.
3.2	Members Questions
3.2.1	There was discussion about whether supplementary questions should be flagged up before the meeting to avoid the Chair reading out the reference to each question. There was also debate about whether supplementary questions should be asked as a group as is the practise in Southwark or whether they should continue to be asked by the questioner. Some members considered that individual councillors 'owned' their questions and

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supplementary questions should not be asked as a party.

3.2.2 Members were concerned that supplementary questions were sometimes answered by Cabinet members who agreed to provide Members with a written reply after the meeting. This information was not always received. Members were advised that this issue had been raised at Executive Management Team and officers had agreed to identify a designated officer who would ensure that members received a reply to their supplementary question within 10 days.

3.2.3 It was agreed that consideration should be given to;

- (i) provision to ask for a written answer only,
- (ii) limiting the time allocated to question time
- (ii) reducing the number of supplementary questions.

3.3 **Motions**

3.3.1 A paper with comments made by Councillor Peake on section 14 of the constitution was circulated at the meeting.

3.3.2 Members agreed that motions were dominating Council meetings and officers needed to consider a more balanced meeting between Council business and motions.

3.3.3 The proposal to allow each member to propose or second only one motion was discussed. However the legal implications of this were not known and the Head of Law agreed to investigate this issue.

3.3.4 The Head of Law advised Members that motions must not be received the day before the Council meetings, because this would not allow officers enough time to consider service and financial implications and could in effect mean that decisions were illegal.

3.4 **Amendments to Motions**

3.4.1 It was agreed that, if possible, notice of amendments to motions should be given. This could be an informal agreement or Standing Orders could be amended.

3.4.2 There is potential for several amendments to a motion. It was agreed that there could be cross party discussion of any amendments. However, Members did not want discussion at the Council meeting to be a rubber stamping exercise.

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- 3.4.3 There was discussion about 24 hour notice for amendments to motions. It was agreed that officers consider an appropriate deadline.
- 3.4.4 Councillor Morris said that a direct question to the Mayor was not always answered by him. He asked for clarification of the mechanism for this issue.
- 3.5 **Status of the Constitution Working Party**
- 3.5.1 The Chair asked the Head of Law about the status of this Working Party. She said that it was an advisory body; its constitution included executive members. The Chair considered that this working party, like the Strategic Planning Committee, should be exempt from Standing Orders so that Executive members could chair meetings of the working party.
- 3.5.2 It was agreed that officers should submit proposals to the next meeting of this working party.

RESOLVED that the investigative work, as outlined above, be submitted to the next meeting of this working party on 15 March 2007.

The meeting ended at 7.38 p.m.

Chair