

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

MINUTES of the meeting of the CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY, which was open to the press and public, held on THURSDAY, 15 MARCH 2007 at LEWISHAM TOWN HALL, CATFORD, SE6 4RU at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillor Hall (Chair); Councillor Walton (Vice Chair) Councillors Alexander, Downes, 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 27 February 2007 be confirmed and signed at the next meeting.
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	Member and Public Questions
3.1.1	There was discussion about how to limit the time allowed for members questions but ensure that each member is given equal opportunity to ask a supplementary questions.
3.1.2	It was agreed that: (i) Members who wish to ask questions at a Council meeting should classify their question as either one which requires only a written answer with no right to ask a supplementary question, or one to which they require a written answer but in respect of which they reserve the right to ask up to one supplementary at the Council meeting. (ii) Members may ask as many questions in respect of which they do not reserve the right to ask a supplementary question and will receive a written answer which will be distributed before the Council meeting. Questions and answers will be recorded and a note kept with the minutes of the Council meeting. (iii) Members asking more than one question where they wish to reserve the right to ask a supplementary question, must number

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the questions they submit in order of preference (1st question, 2nd question, 3rd question etc)

(iv) Members' and public questions must be received by the proper officer by midnight, on the fifteenth working day before the Council meeting and written responses to all questions will be circulated by 5 p.m. on the working day prior to the Council meeting.

(v) At the Council meeting, the Chair will deal with questions where the right to ask a supplementary question has arisen by asking the questioners if they wish to ask a supplementary question in the following order:-

All 1st preference questions in the order in which they were received by the proper officer.

All 2nd preference questions in the order in which they were received by the proper officer

All 3rd preference questions in the order in which they were received by the proper officer

and so on until either all of the questions put have been dealt with or 30 minutes has expired, whichever is the earlier.

(vi) Members' Questions should be moved up the agenda at Council meetings so that the item is taken immediately after Public Questions.

3.2 Motions

3.2.1 It was agreed that

(i) though the time for submission of motions should remain as now, (including the urgency provisions) the time by which any proposed amendments to motions should be received should be 5 p.m. on the day before the Council meeting. The purpose of this time limit is to allow for advice on the implications of any proposed amendment (service/financial/legal etc) to be made available to the Council. If the amendment requires a detailed assessment of such implications which cannot be carried out in the time available, the Chair may rule that the amendment be not put to the meeting.

(ii) after 5 p.m. on the day before the Council meeting no further proposed amendments will be allowed, save that the Chair may at his discretion allow amendments to correct errors or make minor or insubstantial changes.

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(iii) motions will be debated one at a time but the Chair may rule that more than one motion may be debated (but not voted on) at the same time, if in his/her view it is likely to mean that Council business is conducted more efficiently.

(iv) only one amendment to a motion will be debated at a time and no further amendment may be proposed until a decision has been made in respect of the first amendment. However the Chair of Council may rule that several amendments may be debated (but not voted on) together, if he/she is satisfied that it would mean that Council business is conducted more efficiently

(v) neither motions nor amendments may be debated unless a typed copy is available for all members of the Council and the public present at the meeting.

3.3 Chairing Committees

3.3.1 It was generally agreed that as many members as possible should be given the opportunity to chair committee meetings. They did not consider that the Chair of Council needed to be Chair of the Constitution Working Party.

3.3.2 It was agreed that the Chair of the Constitution Working Party should not be precluded from chairing any other committee or sub committee of the council and the constitution amended accordingly.

3.4 Questions to the Mayor

3.4.1 Councillor Morris said that he was concerned that questions to the Mayor were not always answered by him. Councillor Alexander said that all questions were considered by a small number of members/officers to ensure that they were not in contravention to Standing Orders. They were then allocated to the executive member with the portfolio for that particular subject. It was agreed that this matter be considered at a future meeting. Members also discussed possible restrictions on questions and concluded only questions relating to Standards investigations should be restricted.

3.4.2 It was agreed that

(i) the processing of questions directed to the Mayor be considered at a future meeting of this working party; and

(ii) questions relating to any investigation by the Standards Committee, Standards Board or the Adjudication panel should not be allowed at Council meetings.

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RESOLVED that the recommendations, as outlined above, be submitted to the next meeting of the Council on 28 March 2007.

4 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

- (i) a separate Audit Panel be established;
- (ii) the Panel should consist of between 5 and 10 members at least 2 of whom should be independent members and the Chair should be an elected member;
- (iii) the terms of reference of the Public Accounts Committee be amended to remove the terms of reference proposed for the Audit Panel and give the committee the role of scrutinising the effectiveness of the Audit Panel;
- (iv) the Audit Panel should not have any Executive members on it; and
- (v) the Audit Panel will make recommendations to the Council which will hold the formal decision making powers.

RESOLVED that the recommendations, as outlined above, be submitted to the next meeting of the Council on 28 March 2007.

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

Chair