

MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY

Tuesday 16 September at 6pm

Present: Councillor Wise, Councillor Bonavia, Councillor Adefiranye, Councillor Gibbons, Councillor Rathbone and Councillor Walsh.

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Councillor Wise was nominated and elected Chair of the committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

Councillor Bonavia was nominated and elected as Vice Chair of the committee for the municipal year 2021/22.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed

3. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

4. Awards of Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman Titles

The Head of Law presented this item for the CWP to recommend a protocol to the Council in adopting Aldermen and Alderwomen for people who have served on the Council and to make any recommendations around the recommendation. Members were to consider the criteria for these awards, if adaptation were agreed.

Alderman and Alderwoman are a legacy from previous local government arrangements. In 1972 the titles were retained but purely honorific titles/ local authorities frequently use it to reward and recognise the long and good service of Councillors.

The Head of Law highlighted that a councillor who has the title is not prevented from returning to Council subsequently, but if they did, they could not use the title of Alderman or Alderwoman.

The committee referred to Appendix 1 which outlined the protocol for conferring the title of Alderman and Alderwoman to ex-members of the authority. They also discussed making the title more gender-neutral to Alderpersons for Lewisham.

Members discussed the length of time required in service for a Councillor to be allowed the title of Alderman, Alderwoman or Alderperson.

They also discussed whether or not a Councillor had to in service or an ex-Member to be nominated for the title.

Councillor Walsh suggested the committee endorses: a local agreement that Alderperson can be used as a title; enable former councillors to still have the title bestowed upon if possible; Alderpersons will be able to perform citizenship ceremonies.

Counterparts such as Southwark and Bromley require 8 years of service and the title is bestowed upon Members who have not been subject to disciplinary or been made to retire their position in Council.

It was discussed that length of service and the good work a Member has done before they stand down are the most important factors to consider when nominating for the title. It was also argued that a Member who has served 12 years has rendered eminent service of itself.

Members agreed that the process should be that by the time the nomination gets to Council, there should already be a consensus of the awarding, to avoid political or arbitrary conflict.

RESOLVED to endorse the report subject to the following amendments:

- Length of service to be 8 years (subject to agreement later)
- Alderperson to be included as a title alongside Alderman and Alderwoman

Subject to agreement of Members at Labour Group, the recommendations will go to full Council for implementation and amendment to the Constitution.

The meeting finished at 6.50pm