

CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY

22 September 2016

Present: Councillor K Hastrick (Chair)
Councillor I Sharpe (Vice-Chair)
Councillors N Bell (for minute number 12 onwards), S Johnson,
Asif Khan and J Maestas

Officers: Head of Democracy and Governance
Democratic Services Manager

8 **Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

Councillor Joynes was absent.

9 **Disclosure of Interest (if any)**

There was no disclosure of interest.

10 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016 were submitted and signed.

11 **Contract Procedure Rules**

A report was received from the Head of Democracy and Governance regarding the contract procedure rules. The updates took account of the changes due to the enactment of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The Head of Democracy and Governance explained there was a need to update the Contract Procedure Rules. The updates included slightly amended wording on exceptional circumstances exemptions and also made clear that officers were expected to use the e-procurement portal.

In response to questions the Head of Democracy and Governance explained that the e-procurement portal was externally hosted, tenders were uploaded onto an online portal. This was managed by the Corporate Procurement Manager. If respondents had questions then they could send messages through the portal.

With regards to the impact of Brexit the Head of Democracy and Governance explained the EU procurement rules could be changed depending on the actions of the government. However, it was unlikely to change for the next two years.

RESOLVED –

That Constitution Working Party agrees to recommend approval of the Council's updated Contract Procedure Rules.

12

Length of motions

A report was received from the Democratic Services Manager following discussion at the previous Constitution Working Party meeting on whether there should be different time limits for speeches during motions.

Councillor Sharpe commented that under the current rules in the constitution the mover of motion gets three times as long to speak as anyone else. He proposed that the mover of a motion had seven minutes to move the motion and 3 minutes to summate in a right of reply. There should be explicit provision in the case of a busy agenda for the chairman to allocate time at their discretion for each motion, allowing for a balance of debate.

Councillor Sharpe continued that other speakers on the motion could continue to have five minutes as was currently set in the constitution and that the current speech times for the budget as set out in the constitution would remain unchanged.

Councillor Khan commented that motions were usually proposed by the opposition and in order to give parity the current speech lengths of ten and five minutes were sufficient. The debate on motions could be lengthy due to ill-discipline within groups which should be dealt with by group leaders. Curtailing time could interfere with the democratic process when a councillor was trying to articulate a point. He would suggest not making a change to the constitution but for groups to be more disciplined.

RESOLVED –

That Constitution Working Party agrees:

1. to recommend to council that the constitution be amended to state that the mover of a motion may not exceed 7 minutes with the right of reply speech not exceeding 3 minutes. The remaining speech times shall stay at 5 minutes and there should be no changes to the length of budget speeches.

2. that in the case of a busy agenda it should be at the chair's discretion whether to put a time limit on the length of debate for motions whilst still allowing for a balanced debate.

13

Public Speakers

A report of the Democratic Services Manager was received on whether speakers at standing committees, including Cabinet, should be Watford Borough residents.

The Constitution Working Party discussed the report and whilst some members felt that there should be a precedence given to Watford Borough residents, other members thought that any public speaking should be encouraged and that the decisions being discussed might also affect those who worked in the borough or whose children attended school there and thus were not necessarily residents.

It was discussed that although the constitution only allowed for one speaker, it was at the chair's discretion with the agreement of the committee to allow more than one person to speak. Therefore, if a resident registered after a non-resident it would still be possible to hear them speak if the committee agreed.

RESOLVED –

1. that the members of the Constitution Working Party would discuss the matter with their groups and inform the Head of Democracy and Governance if there was a recommendation to take forward to Council.

14

Appointment of the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group

A report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (AG) was received on whether the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group (CSPTG) should be appointed at the first Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) meeting when the task group was appointed. The Chair of the CSPTG must also be a member of O&S.

The Head of Democracy and Governance explained that the change had been requested by the Democratic Services team as there was an anomalous situation where the chair of CSPTG was not appointed at Council but at the first meeting of the task group. The chair had to be a member of O&S due to a previous Council decision. It was suggested that the appointment should be made by O&S when CSPTG was appointed. This would enable the work programme to be discussed ahead of the first meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that there was a period of several months between the appointment of the CSPTG and the election of chair. During this period officers were developing ideas for the work programme and member input from the chair would be helpful.

RESOLVED –

The Constitution Working Party agrees to recommend to Council that the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group be appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when determining the group's membership.

15 **Webcasting**

The Constitution Working Party received a report from the Democratic Services Manager on whether the council wished to pursue webcasting at meetings.

The Head of Democracy and Governance explained that the sound system in the council chamber had the ability to undertake webcasting. It would be necessary to look at the budget situation to see whether the cost could be met through current budgets or if a growth item was needed.

The Working Party discussed the report and commented that it could increase the involvement of the public. Councillor Sharpe gave an example of attending Hertsmere Borough Council's planning committee which was webcast which meant that a Watford resident, who was interested in the planning item but unable to attend the meeting, was still able to view it on the webcast.

If an item on the agenda was thought to be of particular public interest then that meeting could be held in the council chamber to allow for webcasting rather than installing it within the committee rooms.

Councillor Johnson enquired whether the system could be run through Wi-Fi.

RESOLVED –

That the installation of webcasting in the council chamber be further pursued subject to budget availability.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.20 pm