

**COUNCIL BUSINESS  
COMMITTEE**

**6.00 P.M.**

**12TH JANUARY 2012**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Richard Newman-Thompson (Chairman), Roger Mace (Vice-Chairman), Melanie Forrest, Janet Hall, Emma Smith (substitute for Sylvia Rogerson) and David Whitaker

Apologies for Absence

June Ashworth, Sylvia Rogerson

Officers in attendance:-

Sarah Taylor	Head of Governance
Christopher Hanna	Principal Housing Manager
Peter Baines	Senior Democratic Support Officer

**22 MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011, were approved as a correct record.

**23 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman authorised an item of urgent business concerning the Council's response to a consultation on a revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012. The deadline for responses was Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February, prior to the next meeting of the Council Business Committee.

The Principal Housing Manager introduced the report and informed the Committee that the Localism Act 2011 issued a direction order which required the Social Housing Regulator to amend the current standards and content of standards. As a result, the Social Housing Regulator was seeking views from across the social housing sector on the proposed changes to its regulatory framework.

The council's suggested response to the consultation was set out in an appendix to the report.

***Resolved:***

That the Committee approved the Council's suggested response to the consultation, as set out in an appendix to the report.

**24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Whitaker declared a personal interest in item 5 on the agenda: Electoral Review – Consideration of Council Size, in relation to his membership of Morecambe Town Council.

**25 ELECTORAL REVIEW - CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL SIZE**

The Head of Governance introduced a report and asked the Committee to consider whether it wanted to make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the number of members serving on the Council and, if so, what that number ought to be.

It was noted that Council received a presentation from representatives of the Boundary Commission at its meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011, about an electoral review due to commence on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012. At that meeting, Council authorised the Council Business Committee to consider and approve any submissions to the Boundary Commission.

In the course of discussion, members considered the merit of reducing the number of councillors to forty, in accordance with a proposal introduced by Councillor Forrest. In opposition to that view, a number of members felt that the Council would operate in a more effective fashion by maintaining the current quota of sixty councillors.

The majority view of the Committee was that it would wish the Council size to remain the same, at 60. Members who held this view felt that the current workload was manageable, even for those councillors who worked full time. To reduce the number of councillors would increase the workload for each councillor and the effect of this might mean that those employed full-time, and who were not able to reduce their working hours, might no longer be able to put themselves forward as councillors, and opportunity would thereby be stifled.

The view was also expressed that attendance at parish councils was a substantial element of the workload of rural city councillors, and that it would be difficult for them if there were fewer councillors and an individual city councillor had to cover more parish councils than at present.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the Head of Governance be authorised to prepare a submission to the Boundary Commission, on behalf of the Council, which advocated the continuation of sixty councillors on Lancaster City Council. The submission would be prepared in consultation with the Chairman.
- (2) That the Committee would encourage individual political groups on the Council to make their own submissions to the Boundary Commission's review.

**26 ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND MEMBER BRIEFINGS**

The Head of Governance introduced a report about whether to make councillors' attendance mandatory at Member Briefings, and introduce mandatory financial training and mandatory planning training for non-Planning Committee members.

In the course of discussion, members agreed that it was impractical to make member briefing sessions mandatory for all councillors; enforcement would be impossible and, as sessions were held only once, it would unreasonable to expect that all councillors would

be at their liberty to attend.

When discussing the introduction of mandatory planning and financial training, it was agreed that whilst these were important elements of the Council's activity, it was unduly excessive to enforce attendance at training sessions. However, it was suggested that additional support was required for some councillors prior to giving evidence to the Planning and Highways Committee.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Committee would not recommend to Council that member briefings, planning and financial training become mandatory for all councillors, although the provision of training sessions on finance and planning for non-Planning Committee members would be welcomed;
- (2) That the Chairman would write to political group administrators with a request that their members be encouraged to attend more member training events, with particular emphasis on planning and financial training opportunities;
- (3) That guidance on giving presentations to the Planning and Highways Committee should be added to the *For Councillors* section of the council's intranet;
- (4) That Councillors should be offered generic planning advice when registering to speak at the Planning and Highways Committee.

## 27 INDUCTION EVALUATION REPORT

The Senior Democratic Support Officer introduced an evaluation of the councillor induction programme, co-ordinated by Democratic Services following the 2011 local elections.

It was noted that whilst only 18% of councillors responded to the feedback survey, their views were overwhelmingly positive.

During the course of discussion, members reiterated the need for evening training sessions wherever possible, in order to cater for councillors in full time employment, and suggested that town hall tours should be factored earlier on into the next induction schedule.

**Resolved:**

That the Committee noted the conclusions of the induction evaluation.

**28 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**

***Resolved:***

That Councillor Alycia James be appointed as a substitute member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representing the conservative group.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7:25pm)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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