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CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 23 June 2022

Present: Councillor T Cox (Chair)

Councillors P Stuart A Onwuemene
J McManus P Gilchrist
P Hayes

1 **NOMINATION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Phil McCourt, Director of Law and Governance welcomed members of the Constitution and Standards Committee to the meeting and sought nominations for the role of Chair of the Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

It was moved by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes that Councillor Tony Cox be appointed Chair.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved – That Councillor Tony Cox be appointed Chair of the Constitution and Standards Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Councillor Tony Cox in the Chair

The Chair invited nominations for the role of Vice Chair of the Constitution and Standards Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Stuart and seconded by Councillor Julie McManus that Councillor Julie McManus be appointed Vice Chair.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved – That Councillor Julie McManus be appointed as Vice Chair of the Constitution and Standards Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Grahame Kerr (Independent Person)

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

No declarations were made.

4 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2022 be agreed.

5 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that there had been no public questions, statements or petitions submitted.

6 **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT**

The Head of Democratic and Member Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance, which provided an update in respect to the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel and requested the Committee to refer to Council for decision a proposed change to the Members Allowances Scheme in respect to the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) for Group Leaders and in respect to the Basic Allowance for Members both to be implemented from the 2022 municipal year.

Members attention was drawn to a number of updates that had been omitted from the published report, namely:

Paragraph 3.1 of the report – The Independent Remuneration Panel had also met on 14 July and 29 July 2021.

Paragraph 3.3 of the report – the first bullet point should have read: “In the event of political groups having an equality in number of members, the total of the combined leaders’ allowances should be shared between the group leaders, i.e. if there were two groups with the same number of members, the leaders of those groups would each receive 50% of the combined total for leaders of those groups. The same principle would apply to deputy group leaders allowances. However, this would not apply if one of the group leaders or deputy group leaders was the Leader of the Council or Deputy leader of the Council.”

Additional information regarding the travel and subsistence payments was to be added to the report under Paragraph 3.5: “The Panel further recommended that travel and subsistence allowances should align with the scheme for

officers. This would result in a minor update to section 8.7 of the scheme as follows:

- Standard Rate - £148
- Central London/LGA Annual Conference Rate - £185”

It was agreed by assent that these changes would be incorporated into the report to be referred to Council.

Peter Bounds, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel was in attendance and explained the Panel’s rationale for the recommendations they had made.

The Chair thanked Peter and the other members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the work they had done.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus it was –

Resolved –

- 1. That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to amend the Members Allowance Scheme in respect to the level of Special Responsibility Allowance for Group Leaders and the Basic Allowance for all Members, as detailed in the report (including the minor updates reported at the meeting) be referred to Council for approval.**
- 2. That if Council are minded to adopt the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, the new scheme to become effective following the July 2022 Council Meeting.**

7 WIRRAL COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Head of Democratic and Member Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the actions taken in response to the findings detailed in the Working Effectively in the Committee System report which was produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) following a visit to Wirral Council in November/December 2021.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus it was –

Resolved – That the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Group spokespersons of the Constitution and Standards Committee, be authorised to finalise the Council’s response

and submit it to the Local Government Association for consideration and feedback.

8 MEMBER STEERING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Democratic and Member Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance, which enabled the Constitution and Standards Committee to be appraised of the work to date and ongoing planned work of the Members Support Steering Group.

It was reported that the Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Councils vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. The Members Support Steering Group helps Members in their implementation of the five key themes within that plan:

- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter Futures
- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus it was –

Resolved – That the report be noted.

9 STATUTORY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Head of Democratic and Member Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance, which enabled the Constitution and Standards Committee to review the continuing need for various panels, statutory / advisory committees and working parties, and to appoint members and named deputies to serve on those (including statutory committees and panels) that are to be retained in 2022/23.

The Head of Democratic and Member Services asked Members for their direction in terms of number of Members sitting on the various panels and working / steering groups now that the Constitution and Standards Committee was made up of fewer Members in total.

After some discussion it was agreed that three Members would sit on the Standards Panel and three on the Standards Appeal Panel. All six Members of the Constitution and Standards Committee would sit on the Governance Working Group and seven Members would remain on the Member Support Steering Group. The names of the Members to sit on each of these meetings would be provided by group spokespersons of the Constitution and Standards Committee as soon as was practicable.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus it was –

Resolved – That the Monitoring Officer, as proper officer, be authorised to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Statutory and Advisory Committees listed in the report and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

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