

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 7 MAY 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Steve Allsopp, Oliver Donachie, Brian Ford, Jim Grant, Russell Holland (Vice-Chair), Cathy Martyn, Stan Pajak, Maureen Penny and Kevin Small.

15. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

16. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

17. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. Changes to Committees

The Chief Legal Officer submitted a report seeking approval for a change to the Membership of Committees requested by the Council's Labour Group and for the addition of deputies to the Planning Committee.

Resolved – (1) That the changes to Committee Memberships requested by political groups as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20 be approved.

(2) That each political Group Leader be permitted to nominate to the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) by the end 14th May 2020 up to three deputies to sit on the Planning Committee with any subsequent changes to be made via the usual report to Council or Special Committee.

19. Minutes for Confirmation from Cabinet, 22nd April 2020

The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, and Chief Legal Officer submitted a joint report seeking Special Committee's approval of two Minutes from the Cabinet meeting on 22nd April 2020. The first Minute was to adopt the Homelessness Strategy that had previously been approved with partner organisations at the Health and Wellbeing board and the second was to approve changes to the constitution.

Members had no comments on Cabinet Minute 83(2) Homeless Prevention and Reduction Strategy.

With regard to Cabinet Minute 84 Members asked a series of questions regarding:

- How the proposed changes to Council Standing Orders would affect any future years when there might need to be an election for Leader of the Council or other matters to do with a new administration. The Chief Legal Officer responded to clarify that the proposed changes would not preclude this.

- The precise definition of an electronic signature as opposed a digital image of a signature. The Chief Legal Officer agreed to clarify the definition to Members.
- How Cabinet Members and Officers would decide when a delegated decision was “high profile” or “contentious” and whether this choice should be made by the latter. The particular concern was that a Cabinet Member should make the decision about whether and proposed recommendation was high profile or contentious, not an officer, to ensure that there could be scrutiny and accountability.

Members voted to accept the following amendment: "That D & E in page 71 [Part 8 – Scheme of Delegations - Appendix Two to Cabinet Minute 84]] be amended to reflect these concerns of the Special Committee in consultation with the Leader and two Party Group Leaders" in that it would be a Cabinet Member and not an officer deciding which proposals were contentious or high-profile.

The Chief Legal Officer outlined the current process, in which the Scheme of Delegation contains those delegations to officers that Members approve at Annual Council.

In addition to the discussion on the Cabinet Minutes, Members opined about the format of the Annual Council meeting scheduled for 22nd May 2020 in light of the current Covid-19 restrictions.

The Leader agreed that the views of Members be minuted, namely in the light of Covid-19 that the Annual meeting should elect on the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and make any minor corresponding changes to committees that would result from that. However, the review of the political balance and the wider appointments to committees, boards, and outside bodies should be postponed until July 2020 or later in the Municipal Year 2020/21.

Resolved – (1) That Cabinet Minute 83(2), 2019/20 (Cabinet 22nd April 2020) - Reference from the Health and Wellbeing Board - Homeless Prevention and Reduction Strategy be approved.

(2) That Cabinet Minute 84, 2019/20 (Cabinet 22nd April 2020) - Amendments to the Constitution and Delegated Decision-making be approved with the exception that:

(3) The Chief Legal Officer be authorised to amend paragraphs D & E in page 71 [Part 8 – Scheme of Delegations - Appendix Two to Cabinet Minute 84]] to reflect the concerns of the Special Committee in consultation with the Leader and two Party Group Leaders.