

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 12 June 2019

Present

Councillor Kennett (Chairman)

Councillors P Bains, Crellin, Hart and Smith K

The Board noted that items 9 and 10 had been withdrawn from the agenda.

62 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Milne, Patel and Thomas.

63 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 29 April 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64 Matters Arising

Minute 52 – The Board noted that a report on the future of Serving You would be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

65 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

66 Chairman's Report

The Chairman had nothing to report.

67 Review and Approval of Corporate Governance Policy & Local Code of Corporate Governance and Review of Draft Annual Governance Statement

The Board considered the following policies and statement:

- (a) Corporate Governance Policy
- (b) Local Code of Corporate Governance; and
- (c) The draft Annual Governance Statement.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Governance Policy, the Local Code of Governance and the draft Annual Governance Statement as submitted be endorsed.

68 Review of Council's Petition Scheme

The Board, at the request of the Chairman, reviewed the Council's current petition scheme, which has only been reviewed once since it was adopted by the Council in 2010. The Board considered the options available to the Council and the results of a benchmarking exercise of petition schemes adopted by Councils in Hampshire and West Sussex.

The Board felt that the scheme, in its current form, was not particularly user-friendly and not clear on the process or qualifications for a valid petition scheme.

Under the current scheme, petitions with at least 50 signatures were accepted as valid petitions. If the number of signatures was at least 750 or the petition requested an officer's progress report, the issue was referred to scrutiny. However, if the petition had at least 1500 signatures, the petition was referred to full council for debate, unless an officer's progress report had been requested, where it would be considered by scrutiny.

The Board felt that the current threshold for submitting a petition for a Full Council debate (at least 1500 signatures) was too high and penalised those areas of the Borough where there was a longstanding difficulty in motivating the community to sign a petition. The Board noted from the Benchmarking Exercise that although the current threshold was in line with a majority of the other Councils in terms of the percentage of population (1%), it was below the median average (1000 signatures). The Board therefore considered that a more appropriate threshold would be 1000 signatures. The Board acknowledged that there was a risk that a reduction in the threshold could result in an increase of inappropriate petitions being submitted for a Full Council debate and therefore recommended that the threshold be reviewed after a period of 12 months.

The Board noted that a change to the threshold figure for a full council debate would require the other thresholds to be amended.

Resolved that Cabinet be recommended to

- (a) agree the revised petition scheme as set out in Appendix A of the submitted report; and
- (b) review the revised threshold figure for full council debate within twelve months of the revisions to the scheme, as set out in (a) above.

69 Panels

RESOLVED that the following panels be appointed

(a) Budget Scrutiny Panel

Membership: Councillors Kennett, Hart, Crellin and Inkster

Functions: to review the plans for the 2020/21 budget and submit their findings to the Governance, Audit and Finance Board.

(b) Members Remuneration Panel

Membership: Councillors Crellin, Hart, Smith, and P Bains

Functions: to review Councillor Allowances for 2020/21 and submit their findings to the Governance, Audit and Finance Board.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.35 pm

.....

Chairman