

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Standards Committee held on 3 November 2022

Present

Councillors Wilson (Chairman), Crellin, Payter, Raines, Mrs Shimbart, Turner and Wade.

In Attendance

Councillor A Rennie.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Crellin and Raines declared an interest in Item 5 on the Agenda and undertook to leave the meeting for that item.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13th December 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4 Constitution Changes - Coastal work with third parties and electronic signatures

The Committee noted a report on proposed constitutional changes in relation to working for third parties and the use of electronic signatures.

The Leader introduced the report and said that it was important that the council become increasingly commercially focused in the future. It was being hampered by the current provision in the Constitution where the total value of new work for third parties could not exceed £50k. An example of the need for change was the position of the Coastal Service. The opportunity for growth in this area was being hampered by this provision as it was anticipated that the future would provide more opportunities for growth through wider sharing of experience and supporting other public authorities.

Whilst the recommendation was to increase the financial limit set out within the rule concerned to £250k, the rest of the rule would remain unchanged. This meant that any potential arrangement above the new threshold or where the Chief Finance Officer had concerns over risk, would be referred to Cabinet for decision. Cabinet were very supportive of the suggested change.

In reply to questions, from the Committee the following points were made:

- That this change would not be limited to one Service, but that other Services were not currently in a position to undertake larger contracts for third party clients.
- That the change had been proposed in order to ensure that the Service did not lose any contracts. Contracts that were taken on would be risk assessed throughout the process. Any contract between the £100k and £250k amounts would be discussed on an operational level with the Chief Finance Officer, the Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder.

The Committee went on to discuss the matter of electronic signatures. The Monitoring Officer said that the recent pandemic had led to changes in working practices with a significant increase in remote working and an even greater reliance on electronic practices. It had become necessary to accept and formally recognise the validity of electronic signatures on documents such as contracts, deeds, minutes and resolutions.

RESOLVED That the Committee recommend to Council that:

- 2.1 The value contained within Financial Procedure Rule G143 in Part 3 Section G be raised to £250K; and
- 2.2 Amendments be made to the Constitution relating to the use of electronic signatures, as per the wording set out in paragraph 3.2.4 of the report.

5 Councillor Code of Conduct Complaints

Councillor Crellin and Councillor Raines left the meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.30 pm