

**SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL****Governance Committee**

**Meeting held at 6.30pm on Thursday, 20th March, 2014 in the Cross Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, PR25 1DH**

**Present:-**

Councillors W Bennett (in the chair), Foster, Nelson, Ogilvie and Patten

**In Attendance:-**

Maureen Wood (Director of Corporate Governance), David Whelan (Legal Services Manager) and Carol Eddleston (Democratic Services Officer)

**Public Attendance:-**

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<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Description/Resolution</b>
46	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>An apology was submitted on behalf of Councillor Clark.</p>
47	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
48	<p><b>Minutes of the Last Meeting</b></p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that: The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.</p>
49	<p><b>Review of the Constitution</b></p> <p>The chairman presented the report which had been prepared on the basis of the proposed amendments to the Constitution discussed by the Task Group earlier in the evening. The Task Group had been satisfied that comments raised in the course of the current review had been addressed in the proposed amendments, subject to a clarification relating to the provision for recorded votes at any Budget and Council Tax setting meeting and an addition relating to the provision for questions to be asked of Member Champions at meetings of full Council.</p> <p>Members were sympathetic to the concerns expressed by the member of the public about the limitations of the current microphone and voting equipment currently used at full Council; in particular the resulting constraints on the use by members and public of certain types of mobile devices, and the labour intensive style of producing the minutes. They acknowledged, however, that replacing this equipment naturally had budgetary implications which would have to be considered by Cabinet. For this reason, the committee would be recommending to Cabinet that a feasibility study should be undertaken to look at whether the current microphone and voting system was fit for purpose in light of impending regulation and to</p>

make recommendations on the way forward.

The committee discussed the fact that the Constitution already allowed for the use of tape recorders, transmitters, microphones, cameras and similar equipment at meetings of the Council with the knowledge of the Mayor and were confident that any request to use these would be given due consideration by the Mayor, taking into account of course any incompatibility with the current microphone and voting equipment and data protection issues, including relating to the possible filming of members of the public and officers present.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

(1) the following proposed changes to the Constitution be recommended to Cabinet:

(a) the proposed new Standing Order 14 appended to the report replace the current Standing Order 14.

(b) the following paragraph be added to Rule 11 Procedure Rules C. Access to Information Procedure Rules:

*“Reports containing exempt information will not remain exempt longer than is necessary and will be made public six months after the date of meeting or sooner unless the Chief Executive (or other designated officer) is of the opinion that there are overriding reasons for the information to remain exempt.”*

(c) the following paragraph be added to Standing Order No. 22 Voting and Decisions:-

*“(3) There shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the Council of each member's vote for or against or abstention from voting on any decisions relating to the budget or council tax at any Budget and Council Tax setting meeting.”*

(d) provision be included on the agenda of full Council meetings for questions to be asked of any member nominated by the Council as a Member Champion.

(2) Cabinet be requested to recommend the Council adopt the proposed changes to the Constitution with effect from the first Council meeting of the new municipal year in 2014.

(3) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Constitution to reflect the outcomes from Recommendation (1) above.

(4) given the level of disruption caused at Council meetings, a feasibility study be undertaken to determine the suitability of the current microphone system and to make recommendations to improve or replace the current audio system in light of impending regulation.

The meeting finished at 6.50pm.

..... Chairman