

**SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEW PANEL 1
'GOVERNANCE'**

MINUTES

Thursday, 3rd April, 2014

PRESENT: Councillors: Young (Chair), Bagha, Byrne, Ann Chapman, D. Crawford (Substitute for Councillor Noori), Dhami, Susan Emmet, Gallagher, Gordon (Vice-Chair), Gurmit Kaur Mann and Rajinder Mann.

Also Present

Harjeet Bains - Scrutiny Review Officer, LBE.
Lee Teasdale - Democratic Services Officer, LBE.

1. Apologies for Absence
(Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were given for Councillor Stacey.

2. Urgent Matters
(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be considered in Private
(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Minutes (06.02.2014)
(Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Rajinder Mann noted that his apologies for the previous meeting of the Panel had not been recorded in the minutes. He asked that this be amended.

Resolved: That subject to the amendment requested by Councillor Rajinder Mann, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel held on 6 February 2014 be agreed as a true and correct record.

5. Declarations of Interest
(Agenda Item 5)

There were none.

6. Final Report of Scrutiny Panel 1: Governance
(Agenda Item 6)

The Scrutiny Review Officer had submitted the proposed final report of the Panel's findings. The Panel proceeded to run through the recommendations. Discussion took place with regards to the recommendations highlighted below.

Recommendation 9 – There should be a number of minority party Councillors who have full speaking rights at Cabinet.

There was some disagreement amongst the Panel regarding the above recommendation. Some Councillors felt that debate should not be a focus at Cabinet meetings and that there should be more focus on ensuring that pre-scrutiny is as comprehensive as possible.

It was considered overall though that some scope for minority party Councillors to ask questions at Cabinet would offset some issues that would otherwise potentially lead to call-ins.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that the recommendation be amended to read as follows:

“There should be the ability for minority party Councillors who do have speaking rights at Cabinet, to ask questions in addition to the existing right to speak”.

The recommendation was then agreed subject to the above amendment.

Recommendation 10 – Other Councillors should be able to speak at Cabinet subject to the discretion of the Cabinet.

Discussion of the above also fed into recommendation 10. Officer comments had suggested that the recommendation be removed as it would be in contrivance of government guidance which recommended that non-Cabinet Councillors should only be allowed to speak at Cabinet if invited to do so.

The Panel agreed that the recommendation as it stood was reasonable, though it was agreed that an additional sentence should be added to the recommendation to help clarify the reason for its inclusion. The recommendation would now therefore read as follows:

“Other Councillors should be able to speak at Cabinet subject to the discretion of the Cabinet, as at present Ward Councillors have no right to speak on matters which affect their Wards”

The recommendation was then agreed subject to the above amendment.

Recommendation 13 – Backbench aides should be formally appointed, one for each Portfolio Holder. They should not receive any special allowance.

There were concerns raised by some members of the Panel that the recommendation as written above would make Portfolio Holders feel obliged to take on backbench aides, regardless of whether they felt they had the time or ability to work with them.

It was agreed that the original article of the Constitution should still be amended as the existing title of ‘Cabinet Deputies’ gave the appearance that they would be able to make decisions in the absence of the Portfolio Holder, which was not the case. It was agreed that the recommendation be amended to read as follows:

“Article 7.10 of the Constitution should be amended with the wording “Cabinet Deputies” being replaced with the wording “Backbench Aides”

The recommendation was then agreed subject to the above amendment.

Recommendation 27 – Ward Councillors should be reminded that they can set the number of meetings/joint meetings they wish to hold each Council year, within their administration budget.

Recommendation 29 – There should be a requirement for ward-based officers, e.g. Envirocrime, to attend Ward Forums in their area on at least an annual basis.

Panel Members were minded to dispute what they considered to be ‘negative’ comments made by the Executive Support Manager in the Service Officer Comments section. It was requested that the said manager be invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 17 April 2014 to discuss the recommendations.

The recommendations were accepted as written above.

All other recommendations in the final report were accepted in full.

The Chair then asked the Panel whether they had any potential topics to suggest for the Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming Council year. Cllr Chapman suggested that there were significant issues surrounding the public perception of the Council’s Planning Committee, one element highlighted being the awkward user forms for participation.

The Panel wished to have their vote of thanks recorded to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel for their hard work and diligence in ensuring the smooth running of the Panel.

Resolved: That

- (i) the final report be agreed by the Panel, subject to the amendments to Recommendations 9, 10 & 13 as detailed above;
- (ii) the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to approve a final version of the full report in time for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 17 April 2014 and Cabinet Meeting of June 2014;
- (iii) the Executive Support Manager be requested to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 17 April 2014 to discuss recommendations 27 and 29 of the final report;
- (iv) public perception of the Council’s Planning Committee be added as a potential Scrutiny item for the forthcoming Scrutiny Conference.

Councillor Anthony Young, Chair.

The meeting ended at 7:50pm.