

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2017

Present: Councillor Boughton (Chairman), and Councillors Fissenden, Mrs Hinder, Joy, Lewins, Newton, Revell, Mrs Ring and Vizzard

Also Present: Councillors Cuming and Springett

45. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

46. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

47. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Cuming was in attendance as a Visiting Member and indicated a wish to speak on item 8: Courier Run Review and item 9: Webcasting Service Update.

Councillor Springett entered the meeting at 6.37 p.m. as a Visiting Member and indicated a wish to speak on item 9: Webcasting Service Update.

48. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

49. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

It was noted that all Members had been lobbied by fellow Councillors with regard to item 8: Courier Run Review.

50. **TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.**

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

51. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2016**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

52. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that item 9: Webcasting Service Update be taken before item 8, as Alan Price of Public-I had been invited to speak on the item.

RESOLVED: That the change to the order of business be noted.

53. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES - WEBCASTING SERVICE UPDATE

Sam Bailey, Interim Democratic and Administration Services Manager, presented the report providing an update on progress made towards resolving issues with the new webcasting service provided by Public-i. Alan Price, of Public-I was also in attendance.

The Interim Democratic and Administration Services Manager advised the committee that since the agenda was published a meeting had been held between MBC Officers and the Chief Executive and technical lead at Public-i to discuss the ongoing issues. An urgent update had been tabled summarising that discussion.

During discussion Members raised the following points:

- Several ongoing issues had been experienced over the six months since installation. A clear timescale and deadline for resolution was now required.
- The proposed mitigations for some of the issues – such as replacement of cabling or lighting or the purchase of new screens – would all cost MBC additional monies on top of the contract costs. It was felt that these issues should have been identified by the webcasting provider at the preliminary site visit and taken into account during installation.
- The new system focused in on whoever was speaking at the time. Members enquired whether there could be an option to view the whole room, in order to be able to see voting clearly.

Alan Price addressed the committee and explained that:

- Many of the long term issues had now been resolved, such as issues with the microphones, or had been escalated for urgent resolution.
- There was no facility for viewers at home to see a whole room shot, however this could be executed manually at the meeting by an MBC officer using the encoder PC.
- It was unusual for a customer to experience the number of issues that MBC had with the new webcasting system.

The Interim Democratic and Administration Services Manager informed Members that:

- It would be ensured that all mitigation options would be cost effective. MBC had paid for a convertor to rectify issues with the presentation screens as Public-i had not provided the screens, however the cost to rectify all other issues would be negotiated with Public-i.
- Presentations during meetings would be viewable on the webcast player using the Just In Time slides feature. In addition, Council had agreed to amend the constitution to allow electronic voting. Once this was active voting results would be viewable during the live stream and during playback.

The Committee requested that the contract between MBC and Public-i for the webcasting system be circulated to Members for reference.

RESOLVED: That the outstanding issues be resolved in a timely manner, and that - should problems continue - Alan Price of Public-I be requested to return with a package of solutions.

For – 9 Against – 0 Abstain – 0

54. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES - COURIER RUN REVIEW

The Head of Policy and Communications introduced the report which presented options for possible savings to be made following a review of the courier service and printing costs. The report included the results of an all Member consultation on those options. The Committee was advised that an issue with the modern.gov app on the iPad had been resolved, allowing Members to access and annotate agendas on their devices.

In response to a question the Head of Policy and Communications explained that the option to share the use of the van with the Enforcement team was explored but had been turned down as Enforcement required full time use of a vehicle.

Members considered the results of the consultation and noted the following:

- Option B – the use of iPads to access agenda papers – should be the aim of the Council. Towards that end, an annual review of the courier run and agenda printing should take place in order to capture changes in technology and future improvements which may assist in the transition.
- Option E – to mix and match solutions from the other options – was considered the most appropriate way forward for the Committee at the time of the meeting. The proposed solution was that each

Member would be asked their preference from three options, with confirmation to be sought from each in writing:

1. To receive agendas by iPad only;
2. To receive hard copies (with Officers to decide whether to send by courier run or post, whichever was the most cost effective for the print run at hand); or
3. To have hard copies deposited in a pigeon hole for collection.

RESOLVED: That each Member be asked their preference from three options with regard to receiving agendas, with confirmation to be sought from each in writing:

1. To receive agendas by iPad only;
2. To receive hard copies (with Officers to decide whether to send by courier run or post, whichever was the most cost effective for the print run at hand); or
3. To have hard copies deposited in a pigeon hole for collection.

For – 8 Against – 0 Abstain – 1

55. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.33 p.m.