

## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CABINET

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 at 5.00 p.m.  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

### PRESENT:-

Councillor Sparks (Leader of the Council) (Chair)  
Councillor Ali (Deputy Leader)  
Councillors K Ahmed, Crumpton, Foster, Islam, Lowe, Waltho and Wood

together with the following Minority Group Members appointed to attend meetings of the Cabinet

Councillors Blood, Evans, Harley, L Jones, Miller, Vickers and Wright (Conservative Group)

### OFFICERS:-

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources, Treasurer, and the Democratic Services Manager (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Tyler – for agenda item no. 5 (Review of Area Committees)

Councillor J Martin as an observer

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#### 45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare and Mrs Walker.

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#### 46 CHANGES IN REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillors Evans and Miller had been appointed to serve as Minority Group representatives in place of Councillors Mrs Walker and Mrs Shakespeare, respectively, for this meeting of the Cabinet only.

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#### 47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member declared a Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

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## REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the revised proposals of the Boundary Commission for England with regard to the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies.

### RESOLVED

- (1) That representations be made to the Boundary Commission for England to the effect that the proposed Stourbridge and Dudley Constituency should be re-designated as the Stourbridge Constituency.
- (2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Councillor L Jones, be authorised to examine any viable alternative proposal for Parliamentary constituency boundaries within the borough and make an appropriate submission to the Boundary Commission for England.

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## REVIEW OF AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Scrutiny Chairs was submitted on proposals for a review of Area Committees. The proposals had been subject to a consultation period from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2012 and a summary of responses had been made available to Members in advance of the meeting.

At the invitation of the Cabinet, Councillor Tyler gave an overview of the proposals to establish Community Forums with a clear focus on community engagement and participation. The Leader expressed thanks to Councillor Tyler and the Scrutiny Chairs for producing the proposals within the tight deadlines involved. It was noted that the Community Forum structure would remain flexible and be subject to review in the light of operational experience.

Arising from the presentation, Members of the opposition group raised concerns, particularly in regard to the resource implications of the revised structure. It was accepted in principle that the Area Committees required review, however, Members questioned the need for urgency and suggested that the revised area arrangements be deferred until the new municipal year to allow for further cross-party consideration of the detailed implications. Reference was also made to the proposals in relation to the Halesowen area, which had been amended during the consultation.

Concerns were expressed regarding specific proposals in the report including publicity for the Community Forums, the increased number of meetings, Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, the governance arrangements, the suggested timescales for answering questions without the current level of officer support and the need to acknowledge different approaches to community engagement in certain parts of the Borough. Reference was also made to Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and the need to engage with partners to avoid duplication and build on structures already in place.

The Leader emphasised the importance of making changes to Area Committees without unnecessary delay and reiterated that the revised structure would be implemented from existing resources. All the issues raised at the meeting, and in the consultation, would be considered in the development of the Community Forums, which would be flexible and evolve over time to be responsive to the needs of local communities.

#### RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended:-

- (1) That the outcome of consultation be noted and the issues raised be taken into account in the implementation and ongoing review of the proposals.
- (2) That nine Community Forums be established, on the basis outlined in the report, to replace the existing Area Committee structure and that the Community Forums maintain a clear focus on community engagement and participation.
- (3) That the revised structure and area arrangements be funded from existing resources.
- (4) That the proposed dates of the meetings of the Community Forums for the remainder of the municipal year be as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting and that the meetings of Area Committees previously programmed in 2013 be no longer proceeded with.
- (5) That Members be nominated to serve as the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Community Forums initially with effect from the first meeting in February, 2013 until the annual meeting of the Council in May, 2013.

- (6) That, pending a review of the Members Allowances Scheme in 2013, annual Special Responsibility Allowances be paid to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Community Forums and that it be noted that these payments will be within the existing budget allocation for the allowances currently paid to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Area Committees.
- (7) That the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to the existing Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Area Committees cease with effect from the launch of the new Forums on 11th February, 2013 and the Members Allowances Scheme, as set out in the Constitution, be amended accordingly.
- (8) That the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, be authorised to determine the reallocation of any unspent Area Committee local area budgets to the Community Forums on a ward by ward basis in due course.
- (9) That the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to organise development sessions for Members and Officers and to determine any other consequential arrangements to ensure the implementation of the Community Forums from February, 2013.
- (10) That the revised area arrangements be the subject of an ongoing review to ensure that they remain flexible and a full review of the operation of the Community Forums be undertaken after 12 months of experience.
- (11) That thanks to be extended to Councillor Tyler and the Scrutiny Chairs for producing the proposals set out in the report within the tight deadlines required.

(This was a Key Decision with the Council and Cabinet being named as Decision Takers)

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the annual review of the Constitution.

Following comments made in relation to paragraph 21 of the report (Deputy Leader of the Council), the Leader requested that this recommendation be withdrawn for further consideration.

## RESOLVED

That the Council be recommended:-

- (1) That the standards arrangements, produced by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted to the meeting, be endorsed.
- (2) That the Petition Scheme, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report submitted to the meeting, be approved.
- (3) That the revised Article 10 of the Constitution, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report submitted to the meeting, be approved to reflect the replacement of Area Committees with the new Community Forums.
- (4) That the Director of Corporate Resources be given delegated authority to action recommendations from the Community Forums in respect of area budgets, as referred to in paragraph 16 of the report submitted to the meeting.
- (5) That the revisions and updates to the scheme of delegation, as referred to in paragraph 18 of the report submitted to the meeting, be approved and adopted.
- (6) That the provisions for the “reference up” of decisions, as set out in paragraph 19 of the report submitted to the meeting, be approved and incorporated in Article 7.06 of the Constitution.
- (7) That the arrangements for calling special meetings of any Committee, as referred to in paragraph 20 of the report submitted to the meeting, be approved to ensure consistency in all parts of the Constitution.
- (8) That the Council's existing overview and scrutiny arrangements and Scrutiny Committee structure be reviewed and that recommendations be presented to the Council in advance of the 2013/14 municipal year.
- (9) That the implications of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, be noted and that the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to make any consequential changes to the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

- (10) That the Forward Plan of Key Decisions be reported to all ordinary meetings of the Cabinet, as referred to in paragraph 31 of the report submitted to the meeting.
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The meeting ended at 6.10pm.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL