

Minutes of a meeting of the Constitution Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 30 June 2005.

PRESENT

(none) (in the Chair)

Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. M. B. Page CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC
Prof. M. E. Preston CC

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. D. R. Parsons, CC be appointed the Chairman of the Constitution Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2006.

2. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Prof. M. E. Preston, CC be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Constitution Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2006.

Prof. M. E. Preston – in the Chair

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting of the Constitution Committee held on 9 March 2005, were taken as read, confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been asked under Standing Order 35.

5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and (5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been asked under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

There were no other items of urgent business.

7. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Declarations of Party Whip.

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

9. Presentations of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

10. Statement of Accounts for 2004/05.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources presenting the Statement of Accounts for 2004/05. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members sought clarification as to why provision for bad debts had reduced from £1.6m in 2003/04 to £0.8m in 2004/05. The reduction in this provision reflected that outstanding claims with Transco for delays in the completion of work on the highway had largely been resolved and some of this debt had been recovered.
- Members expressed concern at the significant level of increase in school balances which had risen from £15.8m in 2003/04 to £21.1m in 2004/05. Members acknowledged that some of the capital would be for specific projects which were awaiting approval but felt that action should be taken to manage school balances. The Schools Funding Forum had agreed that schools would be consulted on a scheme to control school balances.
- Part of the increase in school balances related to capital schemes and it was suggested that this might be an appropriate topic for a scrutiny review.
- It was queried whether the requirement to make efficiency savings in light of the Gershon Enquiry had been taken into consideration in the budget process. The Committee was informed that this requirement had been taken account of and would become inbuilt into the way in which future budgets were set.
- In response to a question, the Committee was informed that the £0.5m identified for organisational change was to oversee the implementation of projects that would, in the future, generate savings, for example, the call centre and electronic records management.
- The County Council's external auditor had recently changed to Price Waterhouse Coopers who appeared to be taking a stricter line than the

Council's previous Auditor. It appeared likely that even relatively minor errors (anything over £1000) in the Statement of Accounts would now need to be brought to the Committee's attention.

RESOLVED

That the Statement of Accounts for 2004/05 be approved.

11. Statement on Internal Controls for 2004/05.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources presenting the Statement on Internal Controls for 2004/05. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED

That the Statement on Internal Controls for 2004/05 be approved.

12. Honorary Aldermen.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive enabling the Committee to discuss possible arrangements for the appointment by the County Council of Honorary Aldermen. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That this Committee supports the principle of the appointment of Honorary Aldermen by the Council on the basis as set out in the report and that the Council be informed accordingly;
- (b) That the Chairman of the Council be requested to agree to the holding of an extraordinary meeting of the Council for the purpose of appointing Honorary Aldermen immediately prior to the next ordinary meeting of the Council on 13 July 2005;
- (c) That the Council be requested to consider conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on individuals it considers have rendered eminent services to the Council;
- (d) That the Chief Executive be authorised to take all necessary action relating to the appointment by the Council of Honorary Aldermen and the participation of Honorary Aldermen in civic ceremonies and similar events.

