

Agreed:

- (2) That Councillor M Sartin would raise this matter at the next Council APG; and
- (3) That Councillor R Bassett would discuss this further with the Working Group Chairman, Councillor P Bhanot, and officers.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME**(a) DocuSign**

The Monitoring Officer, N Boateng, reported that the Council was looking into adopting DocuSign, not as an alternative to wet signing but in addition, as there was a need that had been highlighted by the Covid pandemic and remote working. She had been working to make sure that electronic signatures were legally binding and agreeable to the Land Registry, which was the case. Other local authorities were already using DocuSign satisfactorily. The Constitution would need to be amended slightly under Article 15 – Finance, Contracts and Legal Matters, sections, 6, 7 and 8, which refer to the Council's common seal. An extra sentence that 'the common seal may be in physical or electronic form as determined by the Monitoring Officer' would give flexibility for either. In relation to anti-fraud concerns, N Boateng would provide a link to Government guidance on DocuSign for the minutes. A report would come to the Working Group to consider at the next meeting.

(b) Additional work programme items

Prior to the meeting, members had been asked to suggest any work programme items for this municipal year. The following suggestions were raised at the meeting.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review of Epping Forest – to check if any amendments to the Constitution were required. As the new arrangements would apply to the elections from May 2024, this should not be required until the order was made by Parliament.

Constitution hyperlinks – to be more user friendly, as it was a lengthy document. The Monitoring Officer would think about this and report back in due course.

Training of new staff on the Constitution – People, Culture and Wellbeing Service Manager, J Budden, was looking into new officer induction (onboarding). G Woodhall advised all staff training courses were on the Intranet and he had liaised with the People Team about the Constitution member training course. It was agreed this was not an item for the work programme.

Section 106 Agreements – in relation to policy and procedures, as to how a S106 was agreed and who had the sign off. Although the S106 was a legal agreement, what the basic parameters should be within a S106 were of concern for the Area Planning Sub-Committees or DDMC, depending on which planning committee was consenting the application. It was agreed that this would be put on the work programme for discussion with the relevant officers on whether a draft S106 could come before the relevant planning committee for final sign off.

Joint meeting of Development Management Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen – to monitor how the committee was working with the addition of other Group representatives, as the planning committee chairmen and vice-chairmen were all from the Conservative Group. G Woodhall advised that the joint meeting only held

six-monthly meetings on 15 September 2022 and 14 February 2023, which would be after the final Working Group meeting for this municipal year had taken place on 2 February. It was agreed that members could raise any issues if they arose, so this item would not be added to the work programme.

Agreed:

- (4) That the verbal report on DocuSign was noted;
- (5) That N Boateng would provide a link to Government guidance on DocuSign for the minutes;
- (6) That a report would come to the next meeting in November 2022; and
- (7) That S106 Agreements (discussion on policy and procedures) be added to the work programme for the next meeting on 1 November 2022.

(Post meeting update: Government guidance on DocuSign can be viewed at this weblink:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electronic-signatures-accepted-by-hm-land-registry-pg82/practice-guide-82-electronic-signatures-accepted-by-hm-land-registry>)

4. CONSTITUTION - REVISIONS & AMENDMENTS

(c) Constitution Updates

The Working Group noted the report that detailed the Constitution Updates of 26 April 2022.

(d) Council Structure

Councillor M Sartin advised that there was a very old Council structure within Article 13, appendix 1 (page 107) that needed to be replaced with the latest version. G Woodhall advised that this could be replaced under delegated powers by the Monitoring Officer. Councillor C C Pond asked if this latest version could also be published in the Bulletin and amended from time to time.

(e) Council Rules – R2 Record of Attendance

Councillor J H Whitehouse queried if there was a requirement for members to sign meeting attendance sheets. It was noted this was no longer required since the latest Constitution Update of 26 April 2022 had included a minor amendment by the Monitoring Officer to Rule R2, as the Democratic Services Committee Officer would monitor attendances at hybrid meetings.

Agreed:

- (8) That the Council structure within Article 13, appendix 1, would be updated and also published in the Bulletin.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next virtual meeting of the Working Group would be held on 1 November 2022 at 19.00.

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