

MINUTES

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2016



COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor George Chivers
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Bob Sampson
Councillor Ray Wootten (Chairman)

OFFICERS

Executive Manager Corporate (Lucy Youles)
Community Engagement and Policy Development Officer (Carol Drury)
Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

6. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Evans.

7. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None disclosed.

8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH MAY 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2016 were agreed as a correct record of the recommendations made.

9. PRAYERS AT COUNCIL - REFERRED BACK FROM COUNCIL ON 16TH JUNE 2016

Decision:

That the Constitution Committee recommends to Council that prayers were held in the Council Chamber at 1:55pm before the start of the Council meeting and that they were not part of the Council meeting agenda.

The Chairman gave a brief recap of the issue of prayers that had been referred back to the Committee from Council in June 2016. He referred to the Religious

Appendix A

etc. Observance Act 2015 and where it stated that “*a meeting of a local authority in England **may** include time for;- (a) prayers or other religious observances, or.....*” the Chairman stressed the word may, it was not that they must.

The Chairman said that he had received comments from other Members not on the Committee who were against including prayers as part of the main Council meeting and he stated that Lincolnshire County Council held prayers before the meeting and they were not part of the agenda or meeting itself.

A short history of the inclusion of prayers at council meetings was given as detailed in the report LDS183.

Members were advised that the issue related to prayers as an agenda item as part of the meeting. Prior to the motion at full Council to re-introduce prayers during the council meeting in September 2015, prayers had been observed before the start of each meeting. This allowed Members the opportunity to participate or not. Some Members had expressed unease at the inclusion of any observance, whether religious or philosophical, as part of the council meeting. To maintain fairness to all those attending council meetings, the Chairman confirmed that any observance was discretionary. He proposed that it was a recommendation to full Council that any observance in accordance with the Local Government (Religious Observances) Act 2015 should be held before the start of a full Council meeting

The proposal was seconded and Members unanimously agreed to make the recommendation to full Council to keep prayers outside the meeting.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

Members were reminded that the paper copy of the Constitution which they had been given when they were elected in 2015 was no longer current. The up to date version of the Constitution was available on-line. Members should refer to the Modern.gov app on their iPads. It was agreed that a training session on the use of the Constitution on the Modern. Gov app would be provided.

The meeting closed at 10.46am.