

WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 11:00am on Tuesday 8th February 2022

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS S Francis (Chair), B Evans, J Richmond, P Dunford, J Dale and A Grant. Arriving at 11:30 was A Bruce

The Clerk & Deputy Clerk was in attendance.

1 Apologies

S Dunford & W Gayler.

2 Declarations of Interest

None received

3. Minutes of last Meeting.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting with an amendment required to reflect the discussion about DFG steering group terms of reference and its status as a committee of the parish council.

4. Review of Council Procedures and Documents

There were a small number of documents to be reviewed during the meeting with the most important being Standing Orders.

The meeting began discussing the Standing Orders and worked through each page in turn with any amendments or comments being integrated where appropriate. There was some debate about the time given to speakers at the public forum and whether they should also be instructed to stand when speaking. This led into a discussion about the Public Participation at Council Meetings Policy and how this needed to be reworked to soften the current tone of the document.

ACTION – Clerk to rework Public Participation document

The meeting then continued with the Standing Orders review but became engrossed in a debate about the use of external mediators to help council resolve its internal issues especially as there had been several allegations, conduct issues and questions about legality of meetings raised recently. Cllr Dale added that this should be a learning exercise to prevent such issues recurring as we were all here as councillors to serve the community and there is a need to be careful not to make unsubstantiated accusations. The meeting agreed to add an additional line into Standing Orders, under section 6 which would allow the Chair to call meeting to which an external facilitator could be invited if deemed necessary.

5. Council Committees Terms of Reference

The meeting discussed the changing terms of reference for Governance to incorporate a scrutiny role as the critical friend to the parish council, making this the Governance & Scrutiny Committee. The Chair has the ability to call special meetings to discuss concerns and issues, there was some debate about the inclusion of

scrutiny with the terms of reference for Governance but the Cllrs at the meeting agreed to give this a chance to establish if it would work but this could be separated at a later date if it was not workable.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 15th March 2022 at 11.00am at the West Dean Centre.