GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2018
(FROM 5.30 PM – 5.45 PM)

PRESENT: Councillor Steven Jackson in the Chair. Councillor Samantha Mearns, Councillor Nick Brown, Councillor Richard Cooper, Councillor Pauline McHardy, Councillor Alex Raubitschek, Councillor Matt Scott and Councillor Christine Willoughby.

Late Arrivals: None.

Early Departures: None.

25/18 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:
An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Norman Waller. Notification had been received that Councillor Richard Cooper was to act as substitute for Councillor Margaret Atkinson. (5.32 pm)

26/18 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:
There were no declarations of interest at the meeting. (5.32 pm)

27/18 – MINUTES:
The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2018 were presented to the Committee for approval.

Councillor McHardy raised an amendment to include her apologies for the meeting held on 13 September and the following text was subsequently added to the Minutes:

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Pauline McHardy.

The Minutes as amended were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Seven Members voted for the motion and there was one abstention) (5.33 pm)

28/18 – EXEMPT INFORMATION:
There was no exempt information. (5.33 pm)

29/18 – PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS - QUESTIONS:
The following question was read out by Mr Peter Lilley in accordance with Standing Order 27:

Members of the public are required to submit Public Questions at least 48 hours in advance of a meeting. There must be a reason for this. Therefore, can Councillor
Jackson please explain what he understands to be the purpose of Public Questions; and exactly how the procedure works; from the moment a resident submits their question to the answer being read out by the cabinet member or committee chairman?

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Steven Jackson, responded as follows:

My thanks for the question, which I will answer in two parts:

Firstly, my understanding of the purpose of public questions is based on the Principles of Public Life, as stated in our Council’s constitution and in particular, the principle of openness. Openness, in this context, is defined as “Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.” However, this principle does also state that information can be restricted when the wider public interest demands, which to me means that should a question relate to legally or commercially sensitive information then answers to Public Questions cannot risk compromising this material.

To answer the second portion of your question, regarding the way the public questions procedure works, I would refer you to the Constitution, in particular Part 4, Standing Order 27 entitled ‘Public Arrangements – Questions’, which lays out the procedure step by step.

Finally, in the interest of openness, and given your interest in the matter, I can confirm that I did write this response myself and I do stand by the contents of it.

My thanks for the question.  

(5.33 pm – 5.35 pm)

MATTER TO BE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION

30/18 – SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING 2019/20:
The Head of Legal and Governance submitted a written report, attached to which at Appendix A was the draft schedule of meetings from May 2019 to May 2020. As usual and wherever possible, meetings of the North Yorkshire County Council were taken into account to avoid clashes, as were other significant events such as party political conferences and, locally, the Great Yorkshire Show and the UCI Road World Championships. Group Leaders and Chief Officers had been consulted on the draft schedule.

RECOMMENDED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That the draft schedule of meetings 2019/20, as detailed in Appendix A, be approved.

(5.35 pm – 5.36 pm)
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2018
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 5.46 PM)

PRESENT: Councillors Steven Jacks in the Chair. Councillors Nick Brown, Richard Cooper, Pauline McHardy, Samantha Mearns, Alex Raubitschek, Matt Scott, and Christine Willoughby.

Late Arrivals: None.

Early Departures: None.

MATTERS TO BE DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

31/18 – POLLING STATION LOCATION PROPOSALS:
The Head of Legal and Governance submitted a written report on the proposed changes to five polling station locations following feedback after the 2018 local council elections. The recommendations were outlined in paragraph 2.1 of the report. Any agreed changes would be in place until 2019 when a statutory review of all polling stations was due to be conducted under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006).

During the meeting the Committee made comments on the following recommendations:

2.1(1) – The polling station at Harrogate Railway AFC serving the ward of Harrogate Kingsley to be moved to Starbeck Methodist Church – Councillor Cooper stated that this change was not necessary as the turnout at Harrogate Railway AFC polling station had been slightly higher than in previous years. Moving the polling station to Starbeck Methodist Church would require voters to cross the level crossing which could deter voters. The Head of Legal and Governance confirmed that the comments would be reported back to the Elections Manager.

2.1(3) – The polling station at The Workhouse Museum, Allhallowgate, Ripon serving the ward of Ripon Ure Bank to be moved to Allhallowgate Methodist Church – Councillor McHardy requested that the ambulance hall be reconsidered as the polling station for this area. The Head of Legal and Governance confirmed that the comments would be reported back to the Elections Manager.

2.1(5) – The polling station at Dishforth Airfield Catholic Primary School serving the ward of Bishop Monkton be replaced by a temporary polling station such as a portacabin located next to the school – Councillor Brown stated that the polling station should not be behind any gates as there had been issues with opening gates at past elections. The Head of Legal and Governance confirmed that the comments would be reported back to the Elections Manager.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That (1) Members note the proposed changes as detailed in paragraph 2.1 of the report; and
(2) the Head of Legal and Governance report the comments received back to the Elections Manager.

(5.36 pm – 5.44 pm)

32/18 – TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT TO PARISH COUNCIL:
The Head of Legal and Governance submitted a written report on the current situation of Bishop Thornton and Warsill Parish Council and to seek approval to temporarily appoint Councillor Margaret Atkinson, Ward Member for Fountains and Ripley, to the Parish Council.

Following the resignation of a Parish Councillor on 8 October 2018, Bishop Thornton and Warsill Parish Council only had two Councillors and were not quorate. The casual vacancy procedures were followed but no request for an election had been submitted to the Returning Officer. As the Parish Council was not quorate and no election had been called, the only option was to appoint the ward Councillor to take the total number of Parish Councillors to three. Under Section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 the principal authority, Harrogate Borough Council, can make an order to appoint to a town or parish council until such a time that the vacancies can be filled by either election or co-option.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That (1) Council appoints the district ward member, Councillor Margaret Atkinson under Section 91 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to Bishop Thornton and Warsill Parish Council in order to make it quorate, unless or until either sufficient vacancies on Bishop Thornton and Warsill Parish Council have been filled by way of co-option or election so that the Parish Council is able to act lawfully, or the Order made under Section 91 (1) is revoked; and

(2) the Head of Legal and Governance be authorised to make the required order.

(5.44 pm – 5.45 pm)

33/18 – APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND BOARDS:
The Democratic Services Officer advised that the Conservative group had replaced Councillor Samantha Mearns with Councillor Victoria Oldham on the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Councillor Graham Swift with Councillor Rebecca Burnett on the Council’s Place Board.

(5.45 pm – 5.46 pm)