

**Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee –  
20 March 2014**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the implications of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider a Notice of Motion referred from the meeting of Full Council on 27 February 2014 in relation to recorded votes.

The Council was required to amend its Standing Orders so as to include provisions for the recording of votes at budget meetings, as explained in a letter appended to the report from Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, and as set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The Civic Affairs Committee unanimously **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council the introduction of a new paragraph 16.6 headed 'Recorded vote on budget decisions' to the Council's Standing Orders, to read:

"If the Council is considering an item on the Council's budget or the setting of the Council Tax, the names for and against the motion or amendment, abstaining from voting or not voting will be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes".

Councillor Aidan Van De Weyer presented a Notice of Motion to Full Council on 27 February 2014 and the following resolution was passed:

"This Council requests that the Civic Affairs Committee considers and proposes amendments to the Council's Standing Orders so that all votes, except for those taken by affirmation and for appointments, are recorded in the manner described in Standing Order 16.5 (Recorded Vote)."

In debating the concept of undertaking recorded votes for all decisions made by Council, other than those taken by affirmation or for appointments, the following points were noted:

- Members should be able to vote freely at Council meetings without the feeling of being pressurised by their political groups, which could happen if recorded votes were introduced for the majority of decisions at Full Council meetings;
- there was already provision in the Council's Standing Orders for a recorded vote to be held on any item, and only six Members were required to request this at a meeting for it to take place;
- members of the public should be entitled to know how their elected representatives voted on specific items at Full Council meetings;
- the letter from Brandon Lewis MP set out positive principles of transparency and democratic accountability, which this Council could drive forward by introducing recorded votes for the majority of decisions made by Full Council;
- the introduction of this would be a step-change and some Members may feel uncomfortable at the prospect of recorded votes, but they had to accept that the Council was a political environment;
- the Local Plan was a good example of how a recorded vote could provide an effective means of demonstrating to residents how individual votes from Members were cast;
- it was unnecessary to formalise this as part of the Constitution when there was already provision for recorded votes to take place;
- retaining the current arrangement provided more flexibility;
- the way the electronic voting system worked in the Council Chamber meant that it was not possible for anyone in attendance to know which way a Member voted, unless a recorded vote was requested;

- the Council's leadership did not impose a 'group whip' and Members had always been able to vote on their conscience.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley proposed that recorded votes be held for all decisions at Full Council meetings, except for those taken by affirmation and for appointments, for a trial period of 12 months. Councillor Jose Hales seconded the proposal and with 3 votes in favour and 8 against the proposal was lost.

Voting on the original motion from Full Council, with 4 votes in favour, 6 votes against and 1 abstention, the motion was lost and the Civic Affairs Committee made no recommendations to Full Council on the matter.