

Extraordinary Council Meeting: Tuesday, 4 November 2014

Motion in the name of Councillor Alison Moore

Annual Council 2014 – External Investigation

Council notes the damning findings of the external investigation into the shambolic Annual Meeting on 2 June including that:

- There is no-one who understands local government law in depth at Barnet. Barnet employs no lawyers.
- There are staff in key roles in the Governance structure in Barnet who are inexperienced in governance matters.
- There was no clear protocol for clearing council reports through taking external legal or other specialist advice.
- Barnet was moving to a very different Constitution at the Annual Council and needed to have given detailed consideration to the implications of moving back to the Committee system. It is not just a question of making amendments to the Constitution.
- Legal Advice was requested on both the political proportionality report and the members' allowances report, but was not forthcoming on either in time for them to be printed. No-one at Barnet queried this or noticed anything was wrong.
- Barnet council does not have access to pro-active professional and expert advice at all relevant times and,
- The clienting of the Harrow Barnet Public Law service has had no professional legal input looking at the quality of legal advice given for 18 months.

Council notes that this resulted in the complete break-down of decision-making in Barnet over the summer and in serious reputational damage and risk to the council.

Council notes that the proposal to outsource the legal service was in the name of the Leader of the Council, that it was the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council who authorised the final detailed Inter Authority Agreement with Harrow for the outsourced legal service, and that it was the Leader of the Council who proposed and presided over the introduction of the new committee system.

Council notes that Barnet still has no say in how the shared legal service with Harrow is managed and developed, and that this rushed outsourcing experiment has been a complete failure, with the service still overspending after a year and a half.

Council therefore calls for legal services to be brought back in house, and for the Monitoring Officer post to be filled by an experienced legally qualified person.

Council also calls for a vote of no confidence in the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.