

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2006**

Councillors *Griffith (Chair), *Adje (Deputy Chair), Beynon,Bloch,*Dobbie,
*C. Harris, *Patel and *Whyte

* indicates member present

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
GPCO35.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</p> <p>Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor C. Harris, and Councillor Beynon, and for absence from Councillor Bloch.</p> <p>NOTED</p>
GPCO36.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interests.</p> <p>NOTED</p>
GPCO37.	<p>AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS ON SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</p> <p>The Chair asked for a brief introduction of the report.</p> <p>The Head of Legal Services representative – Mr Mitchison advised that the report proposed changes needed immediately to ensure the smooth running of non-executive Committees and Sub-Committees and to provide greater certainty about the use of substitute Members in accordance with Council Standing Order (CSO) 43 on Substitute Members. The changes were being recommended to Members now rather than after completion of the ongoing review of the Council’s Constitution. This provision allowed a Member unable to attend a Committee or Sub-Committee meeting to give notice for the appointment of a substitute Member for that meeting. The proposed changes would allow greater flexibility by permitting written notice to be given by 10.00 a.m. on the day of the meeting rather than 3 clear days beforehand as at present. This notice would need to be given the previous working day in the case of meetings before 6.00 p.m.</p> <p>(Councillor Harris arrived at 18:05HRS)</p> <p>Mr Mitchison went on to explain that although notice to appoint a substitute must be given to the Head of Member Services, as now, it was proposed that responsibility for appointing the substitute from the list of reserves, or otherwise, would pass to the Chief Whip for the relevant group. The Chief Whip would then have to notify the name of the substitute by giving a second written notice to the Head of Member Services no later than 3 hours before the meeting. The proposals would clarify that Members can have substitutes when they are absent from their usual Committee for any reason. Giving notice by e-mail is expressly permitted. If a Member were abroad or seriously ill then the initial notice could be given by the group’s Chief Whip.</p>

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Mr Mitchison further advised that in order to avoid potential problems when absent Members had prejudicial interests, and to assist the smooth running of Committees, the report outlined a new system for nominating reserve Members to serve as substitutes on each body from each political group. This arrangement would enable training to be given in advance for Members called to serve as substitutes on those bodies where previous training is essential such as the Planning Applications Sub-Committee (PASC).

The Chair thanked Mr Mitchison for his succinct introduction.

The Committee then briefly discussed the proposed amendments and welcomed the proposals as detailed. Clarification was sought by the Head of Member Services - Ms Semambo in respect of Appendix 1 – under SO43 (8) in terms of who should be contacted in the event of either Chief Whip not being contactable. Particularly the reference to Group Officers required consideration by Members as to who should be contacted in the event that neither of the Chief Whips were not. The Committee discussed this point and advised that if the Chief Whip of a political group was absent or unable to act for any reason, then any action to be taken by the Chief Whip be undertaken instead by the group's Assistant Whips, Group Secretary and Group Chair.

The Committee also briefly commented on the need to ensure full training for substitute members recognising that there had been occasions where in the past this may not have always been the case. In response to concerns expressed by Councillor Whyte as to the advice given that training for substitute members sitting on planning application sub committee was not to be arranged Ms Semambo undertook to look into this matter and respond directly to Councillor Whyte. The Committee also desired that the training would be as flexible as possible given difficulties that some members may have in attending a full day's training. The Committee also felt that it was be of considerable use to widen specialised training to ensure that Members were fully trained in areas such as job evaluation, and dismissal appeal and grievances. Ms Semambo assured the Committee that this would be the case.

There being no further discussions the Chair then summarised and it was:

RESOLVED

- i. that the amendments to the Council Standing Order 43 set out in Appendix 1 to this report and that Part E.8 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly., with the further amendment to point 8 that if the Chief Whip of a political group was absent or unable to act for any reason, then any action to be taken by the Chief Whip be undertaken instead by the group's Assistant Whips, Group Secretary and Group Chair;
- ii. that the amendments to the Members' Code of Conduct for the Planning Applications Sub-Committee set out in Appendix 2 to this report and that Part C.4 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly;
- iii. that the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers set out in Appendix 3 to this report and that Part F.7 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly;
- iv. that the amendments outlined in (i) to (iii) above be recommended to Full

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	<p>Council for adoption; and</p> <p>v. that officers ensure that the training for the specialised non-executive bodies such as the Planning Applications Sub-Committee, and Licensing be as flexible as possible given difficulties that some members may have in attending a full day's training, and that training be widened to ensure that Members were fully trained in areas such as job evaluation, and dismissal appeal and grievances.</p> <p>There being no further business to discuss the meeting ended at 18:20HRS</p> <p>COUNCILLOR E GRIFFITH CHAIR</p>
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