

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Councillors Griffith (Chair), Rahman Khan (Vice-Chair), Aitken, Bloch, Diakides and Whyte

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
GPCO15.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
GPCO16.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>Members agreed to the admittance of the report of item 7, Annual Governance Report being admitted as a late item. The item was urgent as the date of the meeting was the latest possible date for the Committee to sign off the Annual Governance Report.</p>
GPCO17.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Cllr Khan declared a personal interest in respect of item 7, Annual Governance Report, by nature of being a Member of the Pensions Committee.</p>
GPCO18.	<p>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS</p> <p>With the consent of the Chair, the committee received an informal deputation from the Trade Unions, which was considered as part of the following item, Sickness Trigger Levels.</p>
GPCO19.	<p>SICKNESS TRIGGER LEVELS</p> <p>The Chair agreed to vary the order of business to allow for the taking of this item together with an informal deputation.</p> <p>The committee received this report to approve a revision of the Council's trigger levels for when managers formally needed to review an employee's sickness absence.</p> <p>The Trade Unions stated they were unhappy with the proposal as it currently stood, citing both equalities implications and a perceived lack of evidence of likely impact on the Council's overall sick rate.</p> <p>Officers informed Members that the proposed measures were not intended to be punitive, but were designed to encourage a dialogue between the manager and employees on the issue of sickness. It was re-iterated that the measures contained no disciplinary element; they merely amended the milestones for Managers to have conversations with the staff over the issue of sickness levels.</p> <p>The impetus for the change stemmed partly from the fact that currently there were 3 different trigger levels which some managers found confusing. As a result</p>

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	<p>appropriate action to discuss sickness was not taking place. Officers had consulted with the Unions and planned to issue guidance to Managers on the new measures, with emphasis on their supportive nature.</p> <p>Members noted that the five days per year measures, as proposed in the report, would make the authority one of the tightest in London by the Council's own benchmarking, and, whilst supporting the thrust of the measures, agreed to vary the number of trigger days to six. It was stated that this would strike a balance allowing the management of sickness absence in a supportive environment, without seeming to be excessively punitive.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That amendment of the Council's trigger level for formally monitoring an employee's sickness levels to at least 6 days absence in a rolling 12 month period, or earlier if there is cause for concern, with the arrangement being pro rata for part time staff.</p>
GPCO20.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th June 2008 be confirmed and signed.</p>
GPCO21.	<p>MINUTES OF GENERAL PURPOSES SUB-BODIES</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the minutes of the Council & Employee Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 21st July 2008 be noted.</p>
GPCO22.	<p>ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT</p> <p>The committee was presented with the statutory Annual Governance Report of Grant Thornton, which reported on the annual audit of the Council's statutory accounts, value for money and other relevant information. Representatives from the Auditors presented their findings to the committee, stating that they expected an unqualified opinion on the accounts to be given.</p> <p>With regards to the issue of the Alexandra Palace Trust, the Auditors stated that the controls the Council had instigated over the Trust were of a sufficiently temporary nature not to adversely affect the Council's long-term financial position. The Auditors were satisfied that sufficient test of control had been applied, and that action was being undertaken to address past weaknesses. They also stated that they would be formally writing to the Council on this issue in due course. Nonetheless, some Members of the committee stated their unhappiness with regards the stated position towards Alexandra Palace.</p> <p>Members sought clarification on matters relating to the Local Area Agreement Grant, and were informed that although specific arrangement had yet to be put in place with regard to it, Officers were confident that it would ultimately be overseen by a robust management arrangement.</p>

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	<p>Members noted that the Bernie Grant Centre Partnership accounts, although not strictly a part of the Council, were due to be made available in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the recommendations of the report be agreed.2. That Councillors Aitken, Bloch and Whyte note their unhappiness about the information within the report relating to Alexandra Palace.
GPCO23.	<p>THE 2007/08 EMPLOYMENT PROFILE</p> <p>The committee received this report to advise them on the key workforce statistics for the financial year 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.</p> <p>Members enquired as to the process that led to the successful redeployment of 19 people in the profile period. Officers informed them that those who were in a redeployment situation were skills-matched against appropriate vacant positions across the council and redeployees could also self select opportunities. In either scenario they had the first opportunity to apply, before external applicants, when appropriate vacancies arose in the Council.</p> <p>Officers stated that although they were pleased with the general ethnic make-up of the Council, work was on-going to encourage minority applicants to senior positions through a variety of development schemes.</p> <p>The Director of Urban Environment informed the committee that the above-average rate of sickness in his directorate was partly as a result of the outdoor nature of much of the work undertaken. Proactive support to staff was being provided, and Officers were beginning to see the benefits of this in terms of decreasing sickness levels.</p> <p>Officers stated that they were pleased in the reduction of agency staff employed by the Council, but were aware of the lack of accurate information surrounding agency figures for school support staff.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>
GPCO24.	<p>COMMISSION FOR LOCAL ADMINISTRATION INVESTIGATION REPORT INTO COMPLAINT NO 06/A/12508</p> <p>The committee received this report to consider the investigation of the Local Government Ombudsman and to determine action to be taken in the light of the finding of maladministration and the Ombudsman's recommendations.</p> <p>Members noted that the allegations referred to in the case dated from 2005, and were assured by Officers that processes and systems relating to Homelessness had been significantly improved. It was also noted that there were a number of</p>

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	<p>mitigating factors in the case under consideration.</p> <p>Officers informed Members that Homeless people were not now placed in Temporary Accommodation until a decision had been made, with noticeable improvements taking place in the processing of Homelessness Applications in the previous six months.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That recommendation 4.3 of the report be amended to read: <i>That the guidance to officer on the issues raised by the complaint be reviewed in the light of the 2006 Homelessness Code of Guidance, and that clear-cut good practice guidance be in place at all times.</i>2. That the recommendations of the report be agreed, subject to the above amendment.
GPCO25.	<p>PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR HARINGEY COUNCIL 2008-2018</p> <p>The committee received a report seeking approval of the People Strategy 2008-16 and Action Plan. The committee noted that the People Strategy set out a vision for the development of the workforce and organisation, building on activities undertaken in the preceding five years.</p> <p>Members were informed that effective staff consultation had been achieved through the use of focus groups taken from a cross-section of the Council's workforce, as well as the utilisation of information from the Staff Survey.</p> <p>Members were informed that funding for the Strategy was provided through existing budgets, with the Chief Executive's Management Board to look at any monetary gaps which emerged.</p> <p>In response to a Member question about recruitment practices for top jobs, officers informed the committee that specialist recruitment agencies were used where justified and that psychometric tests were used very restrictive.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the report make clear in section 7.1 Introduction, that 70% of residents <i>who responded</i> stated that the Council was "doing a good job".2. That mention be made in the Strategy of "accountability".3. That, subject to the above, GP approval to the Strategy be given.
GPCO26.	<p>EQUAL PAY REVIEW AGREEMENT</p> <p>The committee received a report outlining the package of conditions agreed with the unions for the implementation of 'Single Status' in the Council in accordance with the NJC for Local Authorities Staff National Pay Settlement.</p>

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	<p>The committee noted that the collective bargaining agreement had been agreed at the meeting of the Council & Employee Joint Consultative Committee which had taken place on 11th September 2008.</p> <p>It was noted that, being a separate entity, Homes for Haringey was not directly effected by the new agreement, although the Head of Human Resources had been working closely with the ALMO, and discussions for a similar package were currently in their latter stage.</p> <p>Members noted that the package broadly followed the trends negotiated by equivalent London boroughs, with the Council having also devised its own scale level for lower paid workers. Officers believed this would be a source of good practice for other boroughs.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the committee formally convey their thanks to the head of Human Resources and his team for their hard work on this issue.2. That the terms of employment outlined in the report be implemented.
GPCO27.	<p>RECRUITMENT PANEL FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STRATEGY AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT, URBAN ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE</p> <p>The committee received a report to establish a recruitment panel for the post of Assistant Director, Strategy and Business Improvement in the Urban Environment Directorate. It was noted that this was the final Assistant Director post within the directorate to be recruitment, and that it would complete the senior management structure for Urban Environment.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That a panel of three Members be appointed for recruitment to the post of AD – Strategy and Business Improvement, Urban Environment Directorate be appointed in the manner set out in the recommendations to the report.2. That Officers ensure they work with party Whips when setting the date and Membership of this and future panels.
GPCO28.	<p>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no such items.</p>
GPCO29.	<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>The following item was subject to a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contained information classified as exempt under the Local Government Act 1985 in that it contained information relating to a particular employee.</p>

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GPCO30.	MINUTES OF MEMBER-LEVEL APPEALS RESOLVED: 1. That alternative standard wordings for appeal panel minutes be investigated. 2. That the minutes of the following appeal panels be noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 27 May 2008- 7 August 2008- 12 September 2008
GPCO31.	NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS There were no such items.

Councillor EDDIE GRIFFITH

Chair