

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 10 MARCH 2009**

**Present:** Councillor Eddie Griffith (Chair), Councillor Rahman Khan (Vice-Chair), Jonathan Bloch, Councillor Isidoros Diakides, Councillor Monica Whyte and Councillor Bernice Vanier.

<b>MINUTE NO.</b>	<b>SUBJECT/DECISION</b>
<b>GPCO01.</b>	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</b></p> <p>No apologies for absence were received.</p>
<b>GPCO02.</b>	<p><b>URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>No items of Urgent Business were raised.</p>
<b>GPCO03.</b>	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>No declarations of interest were made.</p>
<b>GPCO04.</b>	<p><b>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS</b></p> <p>No deputations or petitions were received.</p>
<b>GPCO05.</b>	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p>It was noted that at the previous meeting the Committee had requested that details of the Bernie Grant Centre Partnership accounts be provided and that to date these had not been provided.</p> <p>There was agreement that this should be followed up by officers.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.</p>
<b>GPCO06.</b>	<p><b>CAPABILITY, GRIEVANCE AND HARASSMENT &amp; BULLYING PROCEDURES</b></p> <p>The Committee considered a report setting out the revised Capability, Grievance and Bullying and Harassment Procedures.</p> <p>A review of the Council's formal employment procedures, in consultation with the trade unions, HR officers and elected Members, had been carried out during the latter half of 2007. Following this review a series of recommendations had been made and these were reflected in the revised documents presented.</p> <p><u>Capability Procedure</u></p> <p>At present the procedure was lengthy with many stages and disciplinary sanctions</p>

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were imposed. As such managers often avoided using the procedure. To provide clarification and to ensure that managers used the Capability Procedure where appropriate, rather than issuing a written warning in the first instance, a review period would be agreed. Within this period clear standards of work, performance and competence would be set, which would need to be met.

At the end of the process if an employee failed to meet the standards agreed following reasonable review periods they may be dismissed. Employees could appeal against this and the appeal would be considered by a Member Panel.

In response to concerns the Committee was advised that there had been extensive consultation with the Unions on changes to this and the other procedures. The revised Procedures put forward for adoption were acceptable to the Unions.

It was confirmed that elected Members had been consulted as part of the process.

Grievance Procedure

The Committee was advised that the main areas of change were around the timescales governing the completion of grievances; there was often insufficient time to deal with complex cases effectively and therefore it was proposed that the timescales should be extended.

It was also proposed that the number of stages within the process should be reduced from four to three. At present there was a perception that stage four, which was a re-hearing considered by elected Members, was the end of the process and that the preceding three stages were a route to this. Therefore the simplified system would be reduced to three stages that concluded in a Panel constituted of elected Members who would review the case.

The Committee was advised that a mediation option was being introduced and that this mechanism could be used at any stage of the process. Before a case could precede to stage three this would have to have been explored (unless this was deemed to be inappropriate). Training sessions on mediation were being arranged in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to help develop the skills required to facilitate this.

It was noted that Human Resources (HR) would nominate individuals to act as mediators. If either party had an objection to person proposed another individual would be selected.

In response to a query the Committee was advised that systems for monitoring equalities and diversity were being revised and that once the data collected had been audited new and more detailed monitoring reports would be provided. In addition a detailed annual report would be published that provide an overview of trends and set out how these could be addressed.

The Committee was advised that it was difficult to monitor trends in individual cases. However, trends were tracked and monitored through the reporting process.

In response to a query the Committee was advised that all managers should receive internal training on Council policies and procedures. If managers were

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unsure of the processes that should be followed HR were available to assist and answer any queries.

Bullying and Harassment Procedure

The Committee was advised that there were no proposed changes to this policy. However, it was proposed that greater consistency and clarity would be achieved by conducting and managing investigations of bullying or harassment using the grievance procedure framework.

In response to a query, the Committee was advised that, generally, there was limited cross over between the Whistle Blowing Policy and the Bullying and Harassment Policy as the former was used where people wished to remain anonymous. It was noted that the Whistle Blowing Policy had last been reviewed two to three years ago and there was agreement that a review of this should be programmed to assess whether it should be altered in the light of the changes to the policies above.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. That the revised Capability, Grievance and Bullying and Harassment Procedures presented be adopted.
- ii. That a review of the Whistle Blowing Policy should be scheduled into the work programme of HR.

**GPCO07. PENSIONS POLICY STATEMENT - USE OF DISCRETIONS IN THE SCHEME.**

The Committee considered a report reviewing the Council's Pensions Policy Statement on the use of its discretionary powers.

The report sought approval for limited use of the discretionary power to enhance an employee's termination package within the limits set by HM Revenues and Customs. This additional flexibility would enable to the Council to award added membership, added pension or monetary compensation in certain circumstances. Awards of this type would require the approval of the Chief Financial Officer and Head of HR; in the case of first and second tier officers Member approval would be required.

The costs associated with any award would be met from the relevant Service / Business Unit budget.

The Committee discussed this proposal and concerns were raised that this may lead to senior officers leaving the authority with what may be perceived as a 'pay off'. Concern was also raised that this would lead to pressure being placed on Members to award packages and allow officers to take early retirement.

Given the current financial climate and the impression that this may create there was agreement that the report should be deferred to the next meeting and that officers should include specific examples of the types of circumstances where such awards could be justified.

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	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the report be deferred and that a revised report should be submitted to the next meeting setting out specific examples of how the option would be used.</p>
<b>GPCO08.</b>	<p><b>UPDATE ON EQUAL PAY</b></p> <p>The Committee considered a report that provided an update on progress in relation to the implementation of the Equal Pay / Single Status package agreed with the unions in September 2008.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That progress on the implementation of the equal pay and conditions package be noted.</p>
<b>GPCO09.</b>	<p><b>AN EVALUATION OF CONTROLLED STREET DRINKING AREAS WITHIN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HARINGEY</b></p> <p><i>Prior to the consideration of the report it was noted that Appendix 6 contained errors in relation to Ward boundaries and officers noted these.</i></p> <p>The Committee considered a report that provided an evaluation of the current Street Drinking Control Zones within the Borough and an overview of Police activity within these zones. The report also sought the Committees view on extending the number of Street Drinking Control Zones in the Borough.</p> <p>The Police Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) had indicated that the new powers available to them had formed a useful tool in combating anti-social behaviour and that a positive reaction had been received from local residents.</p> <p>Concern was raised at anti social behaviour arising from street drinking at Seven Sisters Station and Wicks Station and it was suggested that these areas should become control zones.</p> <p>It was noted that people cautioned for street drinking often had significant health problems and there was agreement that Police officers should be fully briefed on how people could be referred to the appropriate health services. This would be a practical way of reducing future instances of street drinking.</p> <p>The Committee agreed in principal that the number of controlled street drinking zones should be extended and that reports setting out details in relation to this should be received in the future. In order to monitor this there was agreement that the Committee should receive an annual report providing an evaluation of these.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. That the report be noted.</li><li>ii. That a report setting out proposals for extending Street Drinking Control Zones should be received.</li></ul>

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	<p>iii. That an annual report should be received providing an evaluation of Street Drinking Control Zones in the Borough.</p>
<p><b>GPCO10.</b></p>	<p><b>RESTRUCTURING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME - URBAN ENVIRONMENT.</b></p> <p>The Committee considered a report setting out proposals for restructuring the Environmental Crime service to create a new Street Enforcement Service.</p> <p>The restructuring of the service would allow a broader based approach and greater area based working to be developed. It was envisaged that local action plans would be developed that would focus on Ward based priorities; a Street Enforcement Officer would also be designated to each Ward.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and concern was expressed around the use income derived from the issuing of these for essential services. In response to suggestions that this income should held separately and used to fund specific projects, the Committee was advised that the Government required Local Authorities use income from Fixed Penalty Notices within their mainstream budgets.</p> <p>The loss of income from Fixed Penalty Notices would result in a significant decrease in the funding available for services.</p> <p>It was noted that local businesses and members of the public often complained about the way parking restrictions were enforced and there was agreement that, given the current economic climate, a more lenient approach may be appropriate.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>i. That the content of the report be noted.</p> <p>ii. That the proposals for introducing a Street Enforcement Service, replacing the existing Environmental Crime Service be approved.</p> <p>iii. That a further report should be received following consultation with staff and unions reflecting how the results of this would be accommodated.</p>
<p><b>GPCO11.</b></p>	<p><b>NEW ITEMS OF UNRESTRICTED URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>No new Items of Urgent Business were received.</p>
<p><b>GPCO12.</b></p>	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That as Items 13 and 14 contained exempt information (as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government 1972; namely information likely to reveal the identity of an individual, and information relating to any individual) members of the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.</p>
<p><b>GPCO13.</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p>

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	<b>RESOLVED:</b>  That the minute of the meeting held on 4 November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.
<b>GPCO14.</b>	<b>NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS</b>  No new items of exempt Urgent Business were received.

Councillor EDDIE GRIFFITH

Chair

The meeting closed at 9.15pm