

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
30 January 2006

Councillors: *Rice (Chair), J. Brown (Deputy Chair), *Bull, *Davidson, *Bloch, Aitken, *Haley and Patel

*Members present

GP57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown and Patel, who were attending a Disciplinary Hearing, and from Councillor Aitken.

GP58 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: (Agenda Item 3)

GP59 MINUTES: (Agenda Item 5)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2005 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

GP60 HOMES FOR HARINGEY AND STAFF MATTERS; (2) THE HOUSING SERVICE RESTRUCTURE (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Housing introduced this item which advised Members of General Purposes (1) on staffing matters relating to the establishment of Homes for Haringey, the Haringey ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) and (2) on the restructure of the Housing Management and the Haringey Home & Building Services.

Members were advised that the new arrangements would come into effect from April 06 and that the objective of the restructure was to achieve a '2 Star' Performance rating in December 2006. The Council would then qualify for a grant (of up to £225m) to enable the Council to achieve the 'Decent Homes Standards' for all its housing stock by 2010. Detail of the process, structures and consultation were set out in the report and appendices.

The Head of Personnel confirmed that staff would be protected under TUPE legislation and would continue to enjoy the benefits of secondment and development opportunities within in the new structure. Benefits such as pensions would be projected and other fringe benefits (such as reduced fees to the Borough's health and leisure facilities) would be subject to further consideration.

Members were advised that the officer disciplinary process would also transfer over, with an appeal process, but the panel for this would not include elected members.

Five members of Haringey Council would sit on the ALMO Board but, as set out in ODPM Good Practice Guide, this would not include the Executive Member for Housing, as the ALMO should be seen to be independent, and future inspections would be subject to this being demonstrated. The Director of Housing advised that two new appointments had been made; a Director of Business support and a Director of Finance (one internal, one external appointment.)

Members asked about performance standards and the Director of Housing confirmed that these were as set out in the Best Value Performance Plan, and similar indicators used by the Council, and confirmed to members that the quality of service delivery would not be compromised and he was confident that it would actually improve in the future. Any under performance would result in failure to meet the 2 star criteria and the loss of grant funding. He also advised that possible future savings on accommodation costs could be achievable.

Members were advised that Homes for Haringey would enjoy a close working relationship with themselves at both Ward and Executive level. A quarterly progress report to the Executive was considered good practice and likely to be adopted. The Director of Housing confirmed that sanctions would apply if the Council was not happy with the ALMO's performance; i.e. a mediation process which could result in termination of the management agreement as a worse case scenario. He addressed members concerns that failed contractor visits were not chargeable and a market test of the repairs service, approved by members, would be carried out over the next 15 months.

The Director of Housing confirmed that the new arrangements would result in some redundancies, mainly amongst repairs, operational and design staff, as the need for Architectural skills would reduce under the Decent Homes Standard. There was some concern about the perception of rent collection and the Director confirmed that the Audited Outturn for 2004/05 was 97.5%, placing Haringey in the top quartile in London. It was expected that this would be at least achieved and likely to improve in 2005/06.

The Director of Housing advised that the ALMO would be registered at Companies House and its Memorandum and Articles of Association would be subject to future approval by Full Council.

RESOLVED

That the above report, which is subject to a final Decision by the Executive, be noted by General Purposes Committee.

That General Purposes agree to receive a further report from the Monitoring Officer regarding Constitutional Amendments to Delegated Powers and other matters resulting from implementation of the ALMO.

That Members note that a further report on the strategic policy implications of the ALMO will be submitted for approval to a future meeting of Full Council.

GP61 AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS AND THE CONSTITUTION (Agenda Item 7)

The Monitoring Officer's representative introduced the first part of this report and Members were asked to note paragraph 5.6 of the report which explained that the current deadline for receiving notice of questions fell on the same day that the Council Summons was due to be despatched. If, as requested by members, the text of the questions were to be included within the Summons, then it was essential to allow at least a further 3 working days beforehand to enable officers to collate and prepare this extensive extra material and build in flexibility for unforeseen problems, i.e. sickness and computer failure. Members noted that the current facility for dealing with urgent questions would remain.

With regard to the paragraph 10.7, members discussed the possible rotation of questions; i.e. whether the first response should come from the Opposition? Members agreed that this should be subject to further discussion at Groups.

The Head of Legal Services' representative then introduced the second part of this report which recommended granting delegated powers to the Head of Member Services, in consultation with the Chair of General Purposes, to make minor technical 'housekeeping' changes to the Constitution. He addressed members concerns in that the procedures for dealing with factual, substantive changes would remain the same. The Head of Legal Services representative envisaged that the minor changes would simply amount to correction of obvious errors, staff changes and technical changes required following an amendment approved by Full Council; for example, changes to the membership of outside bodies. Members felt that this distinction would be made clearer by amending the proposed delegation i.e. limiting the changes to just sections E.9 and I.4 and

the correction of obvious errors and inconsistencies throughout the Constitution.

RESOLVED

That Full Council be recommended to adopt the changes to Council Standing Orders, set out in Appendix 1 to this report, as amendments to Part E.8 of the Council's Constitution.

That the rotation of questions (paragraph 10.7 of the report) i.e. whether the first response should come from the Opposition, be subject to further discussion at Groups.

That Full Council be recommended to grant delegated powers to the Head of Member Services, in consultation with the Chair of General Purposes Committee, to make technical updates to the Council's Constitution and that Part F.7 of the Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix 2 to this report subject to this extending only to Parts E.9 (appointments to non-executive bodies) and I.4 (appointments to scrutiny review panels) and the correction of obvious errors and inconsistencies throughout the Constitution.

The meeting finished at 8.10pm

Cllr Reg Rice
Chair