

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2011**

Councillors Meehan (Chair), Khan, Waters, Whyte, Wilson, Rice (Vice-Chair) and Bloch

Apologies None received

Also Present: Ian Bailey, Stuart Young, Dave Burn, Steve Davies

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
GPCO68.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</p> <p>Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Rice.</p>
GPCO69.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>This being a special meeting of the committee and in accordance with Part 4, Section B paragraph 17 of the Council's Constitution there were no items of urgent business considered.</p>
GPCO70.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Executive signalled to the committee that the report on the schedule of staffing (Item number 7) made reference to his post, and that of the Head of Human Resources. He advised that should the committee wish to discuss these roles then they would individually leave the meeting at the required point to allow a private discussion.</p> <p>Cllr Wilson declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 by virtue of his position as a primary school governor.</p>
GPCO71.	<p>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS</p> <p>There were no deputations or petitions.</p> <p>NOTED</p>
GPCO72.	<p>PROPOSAL TO CEASE THE OPERATIONS OF THE EDUCATION ICT TEAM</p> <p>We were asked to consider proposals for the closure of the Education ICT team. The primary reason being that the unit was no longer able to be funded by external Government grants or by the Council. The current cost of funding the unit was £516k, it had an overspend of 35k and its overheads were funded by the Council. The team of 9 staff had been formed over a period of 10 years and provided traded ICT support to schools. They had been funded by a range of ICT Government</p>

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grants and initiatives, core Council revenue budget and income from schools. It was strongly anticipated that the main Harnessing Technology Grant would no longer be available from 2011/12. We noted that the option of maintaining the service but increasing the charges made to users of the service, schools, had been explored with head teachers. However, there had not been a strong indication given from schools that they were prepared to increase payments to continue use of this service. This was understandable as school budgets were as yet unconfirmed and only likely to be finalised at the end of March. Confirmation could only be provided in July of the services to be purchased by schools which meant funding the unit at a loss with no guarantee of income. It was widely felt that due to the economic climate and cuts in public spending it would be unlikely that schools would have the extra income to continue to purchase this service at a required increase of 28% in cost and it was unclear if there would be a ready market for the provision of this service. In essence, there was a financial risk to the Council with the continuation of the service.

In terms of responsibility for the employees and clients that would be affected by the closure of this service, we noted that, since the compilation of the report, six of the total nine staff, of the unit, had been granted voluntary redundancy. Some of these staff were contemplating setting up their own enterprise and offering private ICT support services to schools and would obtain advice and support from the directorate on this. Information on alternative providers for this service would also be provided to schools to assist them in this transition period.

Concern was expressed by some members about the withdrawal of this support service to schools when there was felt to be a need and market for this provision. Clarification was sought on what had been done previously to address the financial viability of the service and whether any benchmarking exercise had been undertaken. Also understanding was sought on whether the service could continue to be provided and the ways in which this could be achieved. The level of communication with head teachers was queried and information sought on whether the impact of withdrawing this service had been fully acknowledged by them. In replying to the committee's concerns the context around the proposals to cease this service were outlined. This was the enforced change in working and funding relationship between schools and local authorities which would have an initial impact for both parties, such as the withdrawal of support provisions, as currently being experienced. Members were assured that meaningful discussion had been undertaken with head teachers but it was inevitable that the enormity of the changing relationship between the local authority and schools would not be immediately realised. The requirement for the Council to make savings in the next two financial years coupled with reductions in managerial capacity had an impact on the time allowed to investigate and examine alternative options for this service. The committee acknowledged that the Council were obliged to not risk public funds by continuing this service which was likely to operate at a loss. This conclusion was following no substantial reassurance given by schools of their continuation to use and pay for this service together with the withdrawal of all government funding for this service.

In considering this report the chair expressed concern about the lack of information provided in staffing reports, received so far by the committee from individual services, on the context of the decisions being sought. It would be important for the committee, when taking decisions on staffing matters, to have a concept of how

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the proposed individual changes to the service fitted in with the overall plans for the directorate and in turn Council reorganisation. It was proposed that individual reports be compiled from directorates outlining where the change structures will be and advising how they relate to the overall Council reorganisation. These reports should be considered by the committee and further accompany directorates reports on staffing decisions to the committee when needed.

RESOLVED

- i. That it be noted that the formal consultation on these proposals began on the 13 December 2010 and was concluded on 21 January 2011.
- ii. That the comments of staff and trades unions and the management response to these as set out in appendix 3 be noted.
- iii. That the equalities impact assessment relating to this area as set out in Appendix 2 be noted.
- iv. That the unit closure of the ICT team and the deletion of posts set out in section 5 of the consultation document and in appendix 1 be agreed.
- v. That individual reports be compiled from directorates outlining where the change structures will be and advising how they relate to the overall Council reorganisation.

GPCO73. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

GPCO74. RETHINKING HARINGEY – SCHEDULE OF STAFFING

Following consideration of the Chief Executive's report on the reorganisation of the Council, which was considered on the 25 January 2010, the committee had asked for further details on how senior manager posts would be affected. This information was enclosed and noted.

The Chief Executive's report on the reorganisation of the Council, was currently subject to staff consultation. The report was due to be adopted at Full Council on the 24 February and the General Purposes committee would be responsible for agreeing the final report after the staff consultation process. Members agreed that there was a need to have early consideration of the likely equalities impact issues before final consideration of this report. It was agreed that the Assistant Chief Executive provide, for information purposes only, the first part of the equalities impact assessment completed on the staffing changes and submit this information to a forthcoming meeting.

RESOLVED

- i. That the contents of the report be noted.

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	ii. That an information report be received by the committee on the first phase of the equalities impact assessment conducted on the staffing changes.
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Councillor George Meehan

Chair