

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2006**

Councillors Griffith (Chair), Adje (Deputy Chair), Dobbie, Patel, Beynon and Whyte

Apologies Councillor Butcher

Also Present: Councillor

| MINUTE NO. | SUBJECT/DECISION |
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| GPCO01. | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY) Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Butcher. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Dobbie and Councillor Patel. |
| GPCO02. | URGENT BUSINESS None received. |
| GPCO03. | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Dobbie declared a personal interest in respect of Item 8 by nature of his being a Member of the Licensing Committee. Councillor Dobbie also declared a personal, prejudicial interest in respect of item 11 by nature of him being the Chair of a staff side-committee at North Middlesex Hospital, and agreed to withdraw from the discussion for the duration of this item. Councillor Adje declared a personal interest in item 11 by nature of his Membership of the General, Municipal and Boiler-makers Union (GMB). |
| GPCO04. | DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS None received. |
| GPCO05. | MINUTES We received an update relating to the Smoking at Work policy as described in minute GPC89. The Head of Personnel informed the committee that the publicity campaign had commenced, and part way through the second cessation programme, 22 staff had already quit smoking. We also noted that a broader staff Well-Being programme was also being put into action, and the Head of Personnel agreed to bring details of this back to a future meeting of the committee. RESOLVED: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the minutes of the Special General Purposes committee on 16 March 2006 be confirmed and signed.2. That the Head of Personnel provide a report on the Well-Being programme to a future meeting of the committee. |

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| GPCO06. | <p>END TO END ADAPTATIONS RESTRUCTURE</p> <p>We received this report to seek agreement for the changes to terms and conditions of staff in the new End to End Adaptations Service being established in Social Services. Its establishment was in response to the recommendations made in the Scrutiny Review.</p> <p>We noted that the new structure was intended to allow the provision of a seamless and holistic service through first contact, assessment, prescription of need, delivery of equipment and through to allocation and management of the disabilities facilities grant. We noted that the team was to be divided into three parts: an intake team dealing with initial referrals, and adaptation team dealing with longer-term work and adaptations, and an integrated equipment store. The restructure would also create a Head of Adaptations Service within Social Services, and recruitment and retention through the £1000 allowance to be assimilated into salaries.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That we note the staffing structure of the proposed new Adaptations service.2. That we agree the previously agreed retention allowance of £1k be assimilated into the salaries of all staff who have an OT qualification.3. That we note the report. |
| GPCO07. | <p>STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2005-6</p> <p>We received the statement of accounts report for 2005/06, setting out the Council's financial statements for approval. We noted that the statements had been prepared with the aim of giving clear and concise information about the financial affairs of the Authority to Members of the Councils, the public and other stakeholders.</p> <p>We received apologies from officers of the late nature of the submission of the revised report, but noted that the bringing forward of Audit Commission deadlines, together with a desire to improve the quality of working papers, created pressures of time which had not previously existed. We noted that a more concise summary statement would be produced prior to the submission to the Audit Commission.</p> <p>Members enquired about the £3.9million Schools overspend referred to on page 3, and the £2.6 million HRA deficit referred to on page 6, requesting information on the cause of these overspends, and what measures were in place to control spending in future years. Officers responded that the School deficit were planned, and covered out of reserves, being intended to cover the phasing out of a temporary one-off grant without a resulting reduction in services. In terms of the HRA deficit, we were informed that this expenditure was a planned use of reserves, with a £5million target level to be achieved over the next five years.</p> <p>Members also asked about figures relating to the Tech Refresh project, enquiring as to what measures were in place to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission investigation into it, and to ensure that sound financial management of the project was then taking place. Officers assured Members that the statement of internal control (p9-12 of the report) explained the control procedures in place,</p> |

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and that the action plan coming out of the Audit Commission report was currently being put into place. We noted that this included a higher level of independence and a more detailed project framework. We noted that the bringing back of the management of Council IT facilities in house was in itself a major project and was being overseen by a Stream Board chaired by the Head of Legal Services.

Members requested clarification of meaning of the line 'contribution of housing capital receipts to government pool' in the consolidated revenue account table of page 17. Officers informed Members that 75% of Council House sales were set over to pay of debt and was paid over to the ODPM, when previously the Council had been allowed to retain this revenue.

Members requested Officers to set out the process that the accounts were to go to following their being looked at by the Committee. Officers set out this process, which began with the accounts, together with the appropriate working papers, being submitted to the Audit Commission. These would then be published and for a four week period in August Members of the public would be able to inspect the accounts, and ask the auditors to investigate any particular issues arising from them. Statutory deadlines meant the period had to be in the holiday month of August, but Officers ensured Members that a notice was given in the local press 15 days before the opening of the accounts. Officers agreed to look into possible extra-statutory publicity, including placing extra adverts in the press, to increase public awareness.

RESOLVED:

1. That we approve the accounts, including the additional carry-forward set out in paragraph 7.6 for Schools.
2. That Officers investigate extra-statutory publicity for the public opening of the accounts

GPCO08. AMMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION RELATING TO LICENSING

We received this item to consider amendments to the Constitution already approved by Licensing Committee, and to recommend them to Full Council for adoption.

We noted the two proposed amendments, the first of which was to delegate to the Head of Member Services the power to appoint substitutes to Licensing Committee, providing those substitutes had received the necessary training which was a prerequisite for membership of that committee.

The second ammendment spelled out the procedure for the conduct of hearings where the business was likely to continue after ten o'clock, allowing the Chair of the committee to make a decision to continue proceedings briefly after ten, or to adjourn business to another day.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members recommend to full Council the adoption of the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to have effect as amendments to Part F.7 of the Council's constitution.

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. That Members recommend to full Council the adoption of the changes to the Council's Licensing Procedure Rules to have effect as amendments to Part C.9 of the Council's Constitution. 3. That we note the report. |
| <p>GPCO09.</p> | <p>DELIVERING THE HR STRATEGY</p> <p>We received this report to advise the committee of the work that Human Resources had been doing to deliver on the HR strategy. The HR Strategy was introduced in 2004 as a 3-4 year strategy to 'proactively improve service performance by ensuring that people perform and they work in a modern and healthy environment'. Officers outlined how the Council had delivered their strategic objectives across the six identified key themes.</p> <p>In response to Member comments on the Council's recruitment policy, the Head of Personnel outlined positive measures which the organisation had taken in order to boost recruitment. The employment of TMP Worldwide as handling agents led to the ability for individuals to submit applications on-line, cutting the time between recruitment and the individual taking up the position of employment. Other measures such as longer opening hours, and the placement of interview dates in job adverts were also positive steps which had resulted in the reduction of average recruitment time from 16 to 12 weeks, with further reductions expected. The contract remained under review.</p> <p>We noted that Exit Interviews took place within the Council. With regards to numbers of agency staff, we noted that the Council was four weeks into a new contract for a temporary staff resource centre, and the Head of Personnel agreed to report back to the committee in due course when a breakdown of information was available. Queries were raised by Members on the usage of consultants, and the Head of Personnel agreed that this was an issue which needed to be addressed, and agreed to report back to the committee on this subject in the future.</p> <p>We noted that the Council worked with the local community in a school entrance training scheme, and that for the first time this year, over 100 local children took part in work experience in areas across the Council, affirming the organisation's commitment to offering opportunities for young people across the borough.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That we note the report and contents of the appendix. 2. That the Head of Personnel report back to the committee in due course on the Council's use of agency staff. 3. That the Head of Personnel report back to the committee in due course on the Council's use of consultants. 4. That the revised Employees Code of Conduct be circulated to Members of the committee for information. |
| <p>GPCO10.</p> | <p>EMPLOYMENT PROFILES ANALYSIS</p> <p>We received this report to advise the Committee of the key workforce statistics for the last financial year 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006. The report provided a very</p> |

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detailed picture of the profile of the Council's workforce, using information from SAP, the Council's management information system.

Members raised concerns over the high rate of non-categorisation of staff entering sickness reasons upon returning to work, with the figure at 55% of those on long-term sickness (categorised as being periods of 20+ days). The Head of Personnel agreed to escalate attempts to analyse and address this high figure and to report back to the committee in due course.

The Head of Personnel also agreed to report back on the extent of retirement and re-engagement, with regards to former Council employees being brought back in a consultancy capacity.

RESOLVED:

1. That we note the report and attached Employment Profile.
2. That the Head of Personnel report back to the committee on progress analysing and addressing non-categorisation in sickness absence returns.
3. That the Head of Personnel report back to the committee on the abovementioned retirement and re-engagement issues.
4. That we place on record our thanks to Officers for carrying out this detailed piece of work.

GPCO11. REVIEW OF TRADE UNION TIME OFF & FACILITIES ARRANGEMENTS

We received this report to review trade union time off arrangements, facilities arrangements and the consultation framework. We also received an addendum to the report, giving the committee revised recommendations coming out of the meeting of the Council & Employee Joint Consultative Committee on 26th June 2006.

We noted that the Head of Personnel had on several occasions over the past months, discussed proposals to change the time off arrangements for Unison with Branch and Regional officers under terms of reference agreed by the Committee. We learned that at the meeting of the Council and Employee Joint Consultative Committee of 26th June 2006, the Trade Union raised further points of discussion regarding the report, and the Head of Personnel agreed to further consultation. The changes to recommendations were included in the addendum.

We noted that the Head of Personnel wished to delay implementing the formula and associated recommendations until the Unison elections in January. Concern was raised by Members over the delay in implementation, but the Head of Personnel assured them that implementation at an earlier stage may have an adverse impact on industrial relations.

Responding to enquiries as to the usage of Union Time-Off, we agreed that the Head of Personnel would agree with the Unions a mechanism to be informed of the activities carried out by Officers granted Time-Off, and to report back to the committee accordingly.

RESOLVED:

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That we note the discussion to date with the Employee side based on the terms of reference for reviewing trade union time off.2. That we agree the recommended changes to the trade union time off provision as set out in paragraph 6.4 of the report addendum.3. That Members agree all other recommendations as set out in the original report4. That, after coming to an agreement with the Unions, the Head of Personnel report back to the committee on a regular basis on the activities carried out by Officers granted Trade-Union Time Off. |
| GPCO12. | NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS |
| | None received. |

Councillor EDDIE GRIFFITH

Chair