

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, 8 MARCH 2007**

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

Apologies Councillor C. Harris

<b>MINUTE NO.</b>	<b>SUBJECT/DECISION</b>
<b>GPCO58.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)</b>  Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Catherine Harris.
<b>GPCO59.</b>	<b>URGENT BUSINESS</b>  There was no such business.
<b>GPCO60.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  Councillors Griffith, Adje, Dobbie, Patel and Beynon declared an interest in item 8, Making the Scheme of Members' Allowances, by nature of being Members.
<b>GPCO61.</b>	<b>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS</b>  There were no such items.
<b>GPCO62.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>  <b>RESOLVED:</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Officers provide to Councillor Dobbie the information requested on the political make-up of consulted authorities in minute GPCO49, Introduction of a new Childcare Voucher Scheme.</li> <li>2. That apologies from Councillor Patel for the meeting be noted.</li> <li>3. That, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2006 be confirmed and signed.</li> </ol>
<b>GPCO63.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF SUB-BODIES</b>  <b>RESOLVED:</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the minutes of the following sub-bodies of the General Purposes Committee be noted:  <b>Planning Applications Sub-committee:</b>   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) 27 November 2006</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

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	<p>ii) 11 December 2006 iii) 22 January 2007</p> <p><b>Pensions Panel:</b></p> <p>iv) 17 October 2006 v) 20 November 2006 vi) 29 January 2007</p>
<b>GPCO64.</b>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GAMBLING ACT 2005</b></p> <p>The committee received this report to make recommendations to full Council on proposed arrangements to implement the Gambling Act 2005. This involved amendments to the terms of reference of full Council, the Licensing Committee, the Licensing Sub-Committees, the scheme of delegation to officers and the Local Licensing Procedure Rules.</p> <p>Members noted that the report had been considered and the recommendations agreed by the Licensing Committee. Members further noted that both political groups in the Council had been consulted on the proposals and were in agreement with them.</p> <p>Members noted that Appendix 5 of the report contained a list of powers which could be delegated to Council Officers. Although these powers could be retained by Councillors, the advice of the Legal Services Officer was that these were operational matters not requiring their attention, and that delegation of powers was at the prerogative of Members.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That Members note the report.</li><li>2. That Members recommend to Full Council the amendments set out in the report.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO65.</b>	<p><b>MAKING THE SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES</b></p> <p>Councillors Griffith, Adje, Dobbie, Patel and Beynon declared an interest in this item, by nature of their status as Members.</p> <p>The committee received this report making the Scheme of Members' Allowances for the year 2007/08.</p> <p>The Legal Services Representative informed the committee of the background to the proposed allowance scheme. It was noted that the Council had a statutory obligation to make the scheme each year. This year's allowances were informed by a report from an Independent Panel on the remuneration of Councillors in London, which had been considered by the Council on 13 November 2006. The report addressed annualising the payments to co-optees as required under the</p>

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	<p>Regulations.</p> <p>Members noted that the proposed babysitting and dependants allowance set out in Appendix 2, paragraph 8.01 proposed a maximum rate of £5.05 an hour, equivalent to the national minimum wage at the time of the writing of the report. However, reflecting both the recently announced rise in the minimum wage, it was recommended that this figure be increased to £5.72. Members also expressed their preference that this allowance be pegged to future rises in the minimum wage. Members additionally requested information from Officers on the verification of the validity of allowance claims of this nature.</p> <p>Members expressed their opinion that the proposed additional allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were disproportionately low compared to the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) for other Councillors. Members were made aware that it was not possible to include the Mayor and Deputy as a direct part of the SRA bands, as the provision for their allowances was given by the 1972 Local Government Act. Members then recommended that the Deputy Mayor's allowance be raised to the same level as that of SRA Band 1 (£7,500), and that the Mayor's allowance be raised to the same level as that of SRA Band 2 (£15,000), subject to Members consulting with their respective groups.</p> <p>In addition, Members requested that references to the Head of Member Services in the report be altered to read Head of Local Democracy &amp; Member Services, reflecting the recent changes in the structure of the organisation.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the committee recommend to Full Council that the babysitting and dependants allowance rise in line to the minimum wage at £5.72.</li><li>2. That Officers provide to the committee a response on mechanisms for the verification of babysitting and dependants allowance for Members.</li><li>3. That the committee recommend to Full Council that the proposed additional allowances for the Deputy Mayor be raised to £7,500, and for the Mayor to £15,000, subject to Members consulting with their respective groups.</li><li>4. That, subject to the changes detailed above, the committee recommend the report to Full Council.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO66.</b>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTATION OF A CHILDCARE VOUCHER SCHEME</b></p> <p>This report outlined the benefits of having a childcare voucher scheme, employee and employer implications and further actions which were required in order to progress with the scheme. The committee noted that this arrangement would be put into place from April.</p> <p>Members welcomed the introduction of the scheme as set out in the report, but suggested that a provider be sought initially for a period of three years, with the</p>

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	<p>option of extending for a further two years.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the committee recommend that a provider initially be appointed for a period of three years, with the option to extend by a further two years.</li><li>2. That, subject to the above, the report be noted.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO67.</b>	<p><b>CHANGES TO MATERNITY AND ADOPTION LEAVE FROM APRIL 2007</b></p> <p>This report outlined to the committee proposed changes to maternity and adoption leave rights as set out in the Work and Families Act 2006. The changes would affect employees where their expected week of childbirth or for those adopting was on or after 1 April 2007.</p> <p>Members were supportive of the changes, but requested that the right to 10 days work during maternity leave could not be used to compel an individual to do a specific job, and requested that this be reflected in the policy itself.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the policy reflect that the right to 10 days work during maternity leave not be used to compel an individual to do a specific job.</li><li>2. That the recommendations of the report be approved.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO68.</b>	<p><b>EXTENSION TO RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING</b></p> <p>The committee received this report to detail the provisions of the Work and Families Act 2006, extending the right to request flexible working to those caring for adults.</p> <p>It was emphasised to Members that the right as reflected in the act only extended to the employee being able to request flexible working. This in no way implied a duty on the employer to grant this request. Members requested that they be provided with information concerning the monitoring of the scheme.</p> <p>Members raised some concerns over the implications of the scheme, particularly as not all employees would be able to work from home. However, it was noted that the Council had a statutory duty to implement the government legislation. Members noted that Officers were currently working on a project looking at flexible working, and that any implementation across the Council would be conducted in a fair and impartial way.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That Officers provide to Members information on the monitoring process for flexible working.</li><li>2. That Officers report back to the committee at the Autumn meeting details of take-up and usage of the extended scheme.</li></ol>

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	<p>3. That the flexible working scheme be changed to clarify statutory rights of employees caring for adults and/or children to apply to work flexibly, as recommended in the report.</p> <p>4. That, subject to the above, the recommendations of the report be agreed.</p>
<b>GPCO69.</b>	<p><b>DELEGATED DECISIONS AND SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS</b></p> <p>The committee received this report to be informed of a delegated decision taken by the Chief Executive. This decision related to changes to the officer scheme of delegation in order to implement the Council Reshaping.</p> <p>Members noted that during the current situation caused by the departure of the Director of Finance, the Head of Corporate Finance was exercising some of the duties of the Director of Finance, by nature of him being qualified by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the full delegated decision document be circulated to Members.</li><li>2. That the report be noted.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO70.</b>	<p><b>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <p>There were no such items.</p>
<b>GPCO71.</b>	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>The remaining items were the subject of a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as they contained exempt information relating to terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods and services.</p>
<b>GPCO72.</b>	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2006 be confirmed and signed.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO73.</b>	<p><b>MINUTES OF SUB-BODIES</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Pensions Panel held on November 20<sup>th</sup> be noted.</li></ol>
<b>GPCO74.</b>	<p><b>NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS</b></p>

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	There was no such business.
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Councillor EDDIE GRIFFITH

Chair