

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
24 October 2005

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

*Members present

GP32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aitken, Patel, Bull, Brown and Haley.

GP33 MINUTES: (Agenda Item 4)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 Sept 2005 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

GP34 MINUTES OF GENERAL PURPOSES SUB BODIES: (Agenda Item 5)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the under-mentioned meetings be noted:

- Planning Applications Sub Committee – 30.8.2005 and 12.9.2005
- Licensing Sub Group A – 6.9.2005, 21.9.2005, 22.9.2005
- Licensing Sub Group B – 13.9.2005
- Pensions Panels (tabled) – 16.9.2005, 27.6.2005

GP35 SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Finance's representative introduced this item which sought members' agreement to the process undertaken in producing the summary accounts for 2004/5 and any comments on the layout and distribution of the accounts. It was noted that the accounts would be available on the web in both summary and complete format.

RESOLVED

1. That the summarised accounts for 2004/5 be approved
2. That the distribution channels for the summary accounts as set out in paragraph 6.8 of the report be approved.

GP36 FINAL ACCOUNTS (Agenda Item 7)

The Audit Commission's Regional Audit Manager presented the statutory report, which covered certain matters relating to the final accounts before a final opinion of the Council's financial statements for 2004/05 could be given.

Members noted that the status of the Audit as set out in paragraph 3. The position regarding the qualification of accounts for Alexandra Palace was explained and members were advised that this would be removed for 2005/6.

Members asked for further clarity on pooled budget schemes and PFIs and the Director of Finance's representative provided an explanation of how they were presented in the accounts.

The Audit Commission's representative advised members that the Close of Audit Certificate has not been awarded as there was an outstanding query from a member of the public regarding Coroners Courts received today. The individual had been asked to put this in writing and once it had been satisfied the Certificate would be presented.

Members particularly noted paragraph 6.5 of the report in which the number of qualified items (i.e. 4 in 2003/4) had dropped to just one in 2004/5 (regarding Alexandra Palace). The Chair and members of General Purposes Committee paid tribute to the work of the Finance Directorate in this regard.

RESOLVED

That the contents of this report and the action proposed arising from the statutory report of the Audit Commission be noted.

GP37 AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of Legal Services' representative presented this item and members agreed to receive a further tabled amendment to the rules on Deputations and Petitions. Members were happy with the tabled addition of the text relating to the relevant terms of reference on referrals and no repetitious Deputation/Petition within 6 months.

Members were advised that these amendments had been proposed to avoid inconvenience to residents; should they arrive at a meeting only to be advised that their deputation would not be heard. Members noted that changes to the Constitution were shown in italics and underlined. However, this had not been shown on the item relating to children and young people but would be amended before the report was submitted to full Council. There is a section on the Web site under 'Council and Democracy'; 'Making your Voice Heard' which sets out the procedure for asking questions and making deputations. **Members required that any refusal by the Mayor or Chair of a Committee to receive a Deputation or Petition should be reported to the Council or Committee for noting.**

RESOLVED

That full Council be recommended to adopt the amendments to Council Standing Orders, in Part E8 of the Constitution, as set out in the appendices to this report with the addition of text to paragraph 11.3 in Appendix A to the effect that if the Mayor/Chair rejects a Deputation/Petition in advance of a meeting then that decision is reported to the next Council/Committee meeting for **noting**.

GP38 AMENDING PART 1 OF THE CONSTITUTION ON SCRUTINY REVIEWS AND CALL IN PROCEDURES (Agenda Item 9)

The Legal Services' representative introduced this item which asked Members to consider amendment to the procedures for Scrutiny Reviews and Call-In, as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to make recommendations on these to full Council. Members noted that Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already agreed all the proposed changes on 29 September 2005 (i.e. leaving The Executive rather than full Council as the final decision-maker on Scrutiny Review recommendations). The Chair of General Purposes Committee had previously asked for the relatively minor changes to the Call-In procedure to go to the Political Groups before returning to General Purposes Committee. These too had been agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 September 2005.

RESOLVED

Members of General Purposes Committee were unhappy that there was no express provision in the proposals for full Council to make the final decision in the event of a dispute between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Scrutiny Review recommendations. They were concerned that the proposals could reduce the accountability of the Executive and reduce back benchers' power. They requested that this be added at the relevant place in Part 1.2 and asked that the report go back to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee (21/11) and to Political Groups for wider discussion before it returns to the December General Purposes Committee (19/12).

GP39 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION ON DELEGATED POWERS AND URGENCY (Agenda Item 10)

The Head of Legal Services' representative introduced this item which asked members to consider amendments to the rules to exercise delegated powers in relation to obtaining the prior consent of Executive members in certain cases, **reporting monthly all delegated decisions already taken and reporting quarterly all urgent decisions to full Council as required by Regulations**. Members were advised that they retained the right to hold senior officers to account when they felt a poor decision had been taken.

RESOLVED

That full Council be recommended to adopt the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to officers, Part F7 of the Constitution, as set out in the appendix to this report with an addition to paragraph 3.05 that any particularly significant delegated decisions be reported to full Council.

GP40 STAFFING STRUCTURE AT 100 WHITEHALL STREET AND PAY AND CONDITIONS FOR FORMER CSS STAFF IN LEARNING DISABILITIES HOMES (Agenda Item 11)

The Director of Social Services' representative introduced this item which set out proposals for an interim pay structure for staff in Learning Disabilities Services formally employed by CSS. It also proposed to establish a new staff structure at 100 Whitehall Street following redevelopment. Members noted that as 100 Whitehall Street would be working with service users who have higher needs than those formally resident, a new staffing structure was required. The report also recommended a more consistent and fair approach for the pay and conditions of former CSS staff following transfer to the local authority. Members were asked to note an error in paragraph 11 of the report in that the year should read 2005/6 and not 2006/7.

RESOLVED

1. That the new staffing structure for 100 Whitehall Street as set out in appendix 1 to the report be agreed
2. That the pay structure as outlined in Appendix 1 be agreed
3. That the detached interim pay arrangements for individual staff as set out in part 2 (the excluded part of the agenda) be agreed.

GP41 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS (Agenda Item 13)

The following item is likely to be the subject of a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contains 'exempt' information as defined in section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to a particular employee.

SUMMARY OF EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL PROCEEDINGS

GP42 MINUTES OF MEMBER APPEAL PANELS (Agenda Item 14)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the member appeal panels of 19 May, 6 June, 16 June, 27 June, 29 June, 19 July, 12 September, 10 October be noted.

GP43 STAFFING STRUCTURE AT 100 WHITEHALL STREET AND PAY AND CONDITIONS FOR FORMER CSS STAFF IN LEARNING DISABILITIES HOMES (Agenda Item 15)

RESOLVED

That the proposed interim pay arrangements as outlined in appendix 1 of this report be noted.

Cllr Reg Rice
Chair of General Purposes Committee