

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)**  
**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2004 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor John (Chair), Councillor Coughlin (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Fox (alternate for Councillor Lyon), Harrod (alternate for Councillor Kagan), D Long, H B Patel and R S Patel.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blackman, Colwill, Kagan and Lyon.

Also present: Councillor Duffin.

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None declared.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meetings**

**(a) 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004 (Special)**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004 be approved as an accurate record.

**(b) 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004 (Special)**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004 be approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendment:

that the membership of the Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee be updated to reflect changes in this year's membership.

**3. Matters Arising**

None.

**4. Deputations**

None.

**5. 2003/2004 Statement of Accounts**

The Committee considered a report presented by Mark Peart, Head of Accountancy Services, on the 2003/2004 Statement of Accounts of the Council. The Committee was asked to approve the forwarding of these

Accounts to the Council's external auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for audit. The 2003/2004 Accounts were attached as an appendix to the report.

Members noted that the annual accounts were produced one month ahead of the new statutory deadline (31<sup>st</sup> August 2004). This is significantly earlier than in previous years. Finance staff were congratulated on this achievement.

A member of the Committee commented on the increase in the Housing Benefit deficit for 2003/04 (p3, appendix to the report) and asked for further information. Max Gray, Finance Manager agreed to provide this at the earliest opportunity. It was also noted that expenditure on Highways, Roads and Transport had been reduced (p24 of the appendix). The Finance Manager agreed to give a written explanation for the variation in expenditure.

Committee members discussed the cost of borrowing money, detailed on p27 of the appendix to the report, and the Finance Manager advised that this expenditure was incurred by every Local Authority. Members were advised that further details of short and long-term borrowing could be found on p40 of the appendix to the report. It was noted that as a result of debt re-structuring by the in-house team, substantial revenue savings had been made.

Members discussed the increase in the number of employees whose remuneration band was £50 000 or more (p29, appendix to the report) and the Committee noted that this increase was related to competition in the job market. It was also commented that London employers paid an average of 29% above the rest of the country due to the difficulties in recruitment and retention in London, which could be explained in part due to the high cost of housing.

A member of the Committee referred to the Housing Revenue Account (p36, appendix to the report) and requested a breakdown of the earmarked reserves. The Finance Manager agreed to provide a breakdown of these figures subsequent to the meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the 2003/2004 Statement of Accounts be approved and forwarded to PricewaterhouseCoopers for audit;
- (ii) that the Chair be authorised to sign the Statement of Accounts.

## 6. **Appointment to Outside Bodies**

*Association of London Government: London Housing Unit Committee*

This item was removed from the agenda by the Chair at the start of the meeting.

7. **Sub-Committee Membership Changes**

None.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm

A JOHN  
Chair

*Mins0405/genpurp/gp4agj*