

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Monday, 12th January 2009 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor John (Chair), Councillor Blackman (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bessong, Butt, Castle, Colwill, Lorber, Sneddon and Wharton.

Apologies were received from Councillors Beswick and Van Kalwala.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 18th September 2008 be received and approved as an accurate record, subject to the finish time being amended to 5.30pm.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were none.

4. **Deputations**

There were none.

5. **Appointments to Sub-Committees/Outside Bodies**

There were none.

6. **Equal Pay Policy and Action Plan**

Members of the Committee had before them a report from the Director of Human Resources and Diversity which set out proposals for the adoption by the council of an equal pay policy and action plan. Councillor Sneddon (Lead Member for Human Resources and Diversity, Local Democracy and Consultation) advised that, in order to fulfil its legal obligations regarding gender equality, the council had produced a second Single Equality Scheme (SES) which demonstrated its commitment to fair pay practices for all six diversity strands: race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

Martin Coopey (Single Status Consultant) explained that, although the council could demonstrate its commitment to equal pay through the single status proposals, it lacked a formal action plan and statement of commitment. He added that many of the actions included in the action plan had already been or were in the process of being undertaken.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the financial, legal and human resources implications of the proposals set out in the report be noted; and
- (ii) that the draft equal pay policy and associated equal pay action plan be approved.

7. **Market Pay Supplements**

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Director of Human Resources and Diversity which described proposals for the updating of the council's arrangements for paying supplementary payments to recruit and retain employees in posts identified as hard to fill. Councillor Sneddon (Lead Member for Human Resources & Diversity, Local Democracy and Consultation) explained that the proposals were intended to ensure the standardisation of these arrangements.

Martin Coopey (Single Status Consultant) advised that the General Purposes Committee had to approve any arrangements for supplementary payments, adding that such payments would only be implemented if a proper business case could be made for them. He went on to explain that, although the current financial situation might ease the problem of recruitment to certain posts, it was important to standardise and clarify the arrangements and to ensure that the payment of supplements would not discriminate against any of the six diversity strands.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding the management of supplementary payments, Martin Coopey advised that approval for them given by the General Purposes Committee lasted for a period of two years. After this time, the Director of Human Resources and Diversity needed to approve any extension, based on a solid business case being presented for their continuation. Any request to increase the supplement would have to be resubmitted to the General Purposes Committee.

The Vice-Chair enquired about the pension implications of supplementary payments. In response, Martin Coopey explained that there was some discretion in this area. It was agreed that the position should be further investigated, with a view to adding a section on this to the protocol.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the financial, legal and human resources implications of the proposals set out in the report be noted;
- (ii) that the draft market supplements protocol be approved; and
- (iii) that the pensions implications of market pay supplements be investigated by officers and that officers report their findings to the Committee.

8. **Calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2009/10**

Members of the Committee considered the report before them, which set out the Council Tax Base calculations to be used for the calculation of the Council Tax for 2009/10. Duncan McLeod (Director of Finance and Corporate Resources) advised that regulations required that this figure be approved by the 31st January prior to the start of the financial year. He also pointed out that the pages of data attached to the report had been circulated in error.

Duncan McLeod then explained how the calculation was made, and he added that the collection rate was affected by factors such as fluctuations in the number of single person households, which qualified for a 25 per cent Council Tax discount, and appeals against Council Tax banding.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the collection rate for Council Tax in 2008/09 be set at 97.5 per cent; and
- (ii) that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by the council as its Council Tax Base for 2009/10 be set at 95,279.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

10. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED:-

that the press and public be now excluded from the meeting as the matter to be discussed was exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972:

Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

11. **Single Status Pay Review**

Councillor Sneddon (Lead Member for Human Resources and Diversity, Local Democracy and Consultation) introduced the report from the Director of Human Resources and Diversity which sought the Committee's decision as to how the council should proceed to achieve a single status pay structure. The report also summarised issues concerning the application of London Weighting allowances to council employees.

Martin Coopey (Single Status Consultant) explained that since the end of 2007, the council had been waiting for the trades unions to conclude negotiations on the single status pay review. Martin Coopey advised that, for the council, the matter

was now pressing, as the delay in reaching an overall agreement would increase the risk that outstanding equal pay claims could be progressed to employment tribunals. In addition, the council had a capitalisation allocation from the Department of Communities and Local Government, which had to be spent by the end of the financial year. Lastly, employees who stood to benefit from the single status pay review had waited a significant time for their pay increases. In view of these factors, the Committee was asked to approve a proposal that the council withdraw its single status offer and implement the provisions necessary to achieve single status through individual agreements with the employees concerned.

On the subject of London Weighting allowances, Martin Coopey explained that the existing system contained many anomalies, and that an affordable and acceptable solution to this situation would not easily be found. There were, however, steps that the council could take to reduce the current anomalies before a formal agreement was reached with the unions, and the Committee's approval was sought for these.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the council's single status offer to the trades unions be withdrawn with immediate effect, and that the trades unions be advised of this decision;
- (ii) that those elements of the council's proposals necessary to achieve single status be implemented, by seeking individual agreement with employees;
- (iii) that payments arising from the above resolution be made as lump sums to reduce a potential administrative backlog; and
- (iv) that it be agreed that, pending the detailed review of London allowances, the interim arrangements set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report be implemented to limit "protection" of "inner London" allowances, subject to consultation with the unions.

The meeting closed at 7.23pm.

A JOHN
Chair