

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 3 June 2010.

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (Chairman)  
Cllr A Fahn (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs J A E Clarke  
J Murray

Cllrs P Rawcliffe  
Mrs P E Turner MBE

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R C Stay

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P A Blaine  
D Bowater  
Mrs A M Lewis

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Dunleavy Electoral and Members' Services  
Manager  
Mrs C Jones Head of Strategy  
Mr L Manning Democratic Services Officer  
Mr G McFarlane Acting Assistant Director, People

GPC/10/2 **Minutes**

### RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on 10 February 2010 and 22 April 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendments to the Minutes of 10 February 2010:

a) **Present**

Insert 'R A Baker' before 'P A Blaine'

b) **Apologies for Absence**

Delete 'Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R A Baker'

c) **Substitutes**

Delete 'Substitutes: Cllrs K C Matthews'

d) **Members in Attendance**

Insert 'K C Matthews' after 'J G Jamieson'

GPC/10/3 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None notified.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None notified.

GPC/10/4 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

GPC/10/5 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

GPC/10/6 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations from members of the public were received in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

GPC/10/7 **Recommendations of the Boundary Committee for England on the Electoral Review of Central Bedfordshire**

The Committee received a report and verbal update from the Electoral and Members' Services Manager on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's 'Draft Recommendations on the New Electoral Arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council'.

The meeting noted that although published on 17 May 2010 the document itself had only been received by the Council on 2 June. The meeting further noted that a response to the draft recommendations had to be submitted to the Commission by 12 July. As such approval was sought to delegate authority for the preparation of a draft submission in response to the Commission's proposals to Council on 24 June 2010

Members were advised that the Council was only one of many consultees and other views and comments would be submitted to the Commission at the same time as those expressed by this authority.

The Chairman of the Council's Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group, which had met the previous day to consider the Commission's draft recommendations, reported verbally on the Group's discussions. The

Committee noted that the Group had, in particular, focused on the Commission's recommendations relating to Sandy, which involved a proposed three Member ward to include Blunham. Additionally, the Committee noted that the Commission had recommended a change to the pattern of wards for Dunstable, which differed to that submitted by Central Bedfordshire Council, and which involved a proposed extension to the Northfields ward to form a two Member ward. Whilst willing to accept the Commission's recommendation for Dunstable the Working Group was unable to support that relating to Sandy as it was felt that Blunham lacked ties to Sandy and was closer in this respect to Moggerhanger. As such it was felt that the Council should object to the Commission's recommendation on Sandy and seek support for this position through consultation with Members and neighbouring parish councils.

The Chairman of the Working Group also referred to errors in the Commission's document relating to the ratio of Councillors with the number of electors in Biggleswade and to the number of Councillors at Leighton-Linslade Town Council.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the conclusions reached by the Council's Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group with regard to the content of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's 'Draft Recommendations on the New Electoral Arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council', as presented by the Chairman of the Group, be supported and consultation be carried out with both Members and neighbouring parish councils regarding the Commission's proposals to include the village of Blunham within a ward in Sandy;**
- 2. that the Director of Customer and Shared Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and the Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group, be authorised to prepare the draft submission as the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's 'Draft Recommendations on the New Electoral Arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council' including taking account of any further responses to consultation received in the intervening period prior to the Council meeting on 24 June 2010 at which the draft submission is to be presented.**

## ***RECOMMENDED to Council***

- 1. that Council consider any responses received from town and parish councils;***
- 2. that Council approve the draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission's 'Draft Recommendations on the New Electoral Arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council';***
- 3. that the Director of Customer and Shared Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group, be authorised to respond to any questions from the Local***

***Government Boundary Commission raised in connection with the submission.***

GPC/10/8 **Home Working Policy**

The Committee considered a report which sought the Committee's adoption of a Home Working Policy for non schools based employees with immediate effect. A copy of the Policy was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The meeting noted that the Policy set out a number of different flexible working arrangements that supported full time Home Working, Remote Working and Ad Hoc Mobile Working. In addition the Policy reflected both formal and informal arrangements that existed in the legacy authorities and provided clear guidance to managers and employees on their responsibilities and how the options could be implemented.

The meeting further noted that as consultation had already started with employees regarding office relocation the Home Working Policy had already been approved by Corporate Management Team on 14 May 2010 and made available to employees in view of the need to urgently progress any formal applications by them.

In response to a Member's query the Acting Assistant Director, People stated that the trade unions had been supportive of the Policy and recognised that it could mitigate the difficulties which would be experienced by some people as a result of office relocation.

The meeting noted that whilst technological development had increased the types of jobs which could be undertaken away from a static office environment the number of true 'home workers' was likely to remain small.

A Member commented on the need to ensure that employees taking part in home working were fully aware of any tax implications of their action.

**RESOLVED**

**that the document entitled 'Home Working Policy (Including Remote Working)', as set out at Appendix A to the report of the Acting Assistant Director, People, be approved and adopted for all non schools based employees of Central Bedfordshire Council with immediate effect.**

GPC/10/9 **Review of Consultation and Negotiation Arrangements with Professional Associations (JCNC)**

Members considered a report which set out a proposed amendment to the Constitution which would remove the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JCNC) as a sub-committee of the General Purposes Committee. Members were aware that the proposal had already been considered at a meeting of the Constitution Advisory Group (CAG) on 1 June 2010 where it had been agreed that, subject to the

endorsement of the General Purposes Committee, a recommendation would be made by the CAG to Council to amend the Constitution to remove the JCNC.

The Committee supported the proposal to remove the provisions for the JCNC from the Constitution. Comments were made that the proposed informal Joint Consultative and Negotiating Forum, which would enable the professional bodies to discuss matters with the appropriate Portfolio Holder and the Director of Children's Services, would provide a more effective option. It was noted that the professional bodies' representatives had also indicated their support for this change.

However, the Committee also made clear that it would not wish to lose all responsibility in this area and Members welcomed the proposal that, in exceptional circumstances, where matters relating to HR policies, or terms and conditions remained unresolved through the existing working parties and by the proposed Forum, these matters would be referred to the Committee to be resolved/determined.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. that the proposed recommendation by the Constitution Advisory Group to amend the Constitution and remove the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JCNC) as a subsidiary body of General Purposes Committee be endorsed;**
- 2. that a summary report for information and noting be submitted to the General Purposes Committee following each meeting of the proposed Joint Consultative and Negotiating Forum;**
- 3. that, where possible, Forum meetings be held shortly before scheduled meetings of the Committee so that any information that arises is not rendered out of date by the time it is reported.**

(Note: Councillor Fahn was not present when this item was considered and took no part in the discussion or decision thereon.)

## GPC/10/10 **Harmonisation**

The Committee considered a report which sought Member's comments for presentation to the meeting of the Executive on 8 June 2010 on the proposal to discontinue with plans to harmonise pay, terms and conditions of service for employees. The meeting noted that the proposal had arisen following the receipt of new legal advice on this matter and the resulting revised financial cost of implementing the process.

To assist it in its deliberations the meeting also had before it at Appendix A a copy of a report that was to be submitted to Executive on this issue.

The Committee was advised that harmonisation would be discussed by Members and trade union representatives at the meeting of the Employee Partnership Committee being held that afternoon. The Acting Assistant Director, People stressed that, in addition, officers were in constant dialogue with union representatives and that the latter were fully mindful of the underlying issues and implications relating to the harmonisation process.

Discussion followed during which a Member sought clarification regarding aspects of the working arrangements inherited from the legacy authorities and the equal pay issues if harmonisation did not proceed.

**RESOLVED**

**that Executive be advised that the Committee supports the recommendation, as set out in the report to Executive on 8 June 2010, to discontinue the harmonisation of pay, terms and conditions of service for employees, as was originally envisaged, in recognition that staff who transferred from the three legacy authorities on 1 April 2009 are protected under the TUPE regulations.**

(Note: Councillor Murray asked for his vote against the above resolution to be recorded.)

GPC/10/11 **Date of Next Meeting**

**NOTED**

**that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 7 October 2010 at 10.00 a.m.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.47 a.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....