

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 28 January 2013

### PRESENT

Cllr P Hollick (Chairman)  
Cllr R C Stay (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs P N Aldis  
Mrs G Clarke  
J G Jamieson  
M R Jones  
D J Lawrence

Cllrs Mrs J G Lawrence  
J Murray  
B Saunders  
N Warren

Apologies for Absence: Cllr K C Matthews

Substitutes: Cllr Mrs C F Chapman MBE (In place of K C Matthews)

Officers in Attendance: Mr J Atkinson – Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer  
Ms M Peaston – Committee Services Manager

GPC/12/32 **Minutes**

### RESOLVED

**that the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 6 December 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:**

#### **Appendix A: Pay Policy Statement 2013/14**

#### **Section 5 - Pay Comparisons**

**At the end of paragraph three delete “1:8” and insert “8:1”.**

GPC/12/33 **Members' Interests**

None.

GPC/12/34 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

GPC/12/35 **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/12/36 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

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

GPC/12/37 **Open Questions at Council - Special Provision for Leaders of Minority Groups**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought Members' views on amending the Constitution to give special provision to the minority group leaders so they could ask one Open Question each at the beginning of the Open Questions item at Council meetings.

The meeting noted that the Leader of the Independent Group had requested that this matter be considered due to the impact of the random nature of the current process by which questions were chosen to be answered. He referred to the failure by Council to consider one of his own Open Questions due to lack of time, although the issue he wished considered was, in his view, of greater importance in relation to the Council's business than his other questions which had been successfully raised.

The Committee was minded to agree that the minority group leaders should be allowed the opportunity each to ask a preliminary Open Question at Council meetings. However, a Member regarded the inclusion of this practice within the Council's Constitution as overly bureaucratic. He suggested that, instead, the matter be dealt with on a more informal basis through the authority of the Chairman of the Council. Although concern was expressed that such an arrangement could lead to inconsistency of application the Committee as a whole indicated its clear support for the Member's suggestion.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

**that the Chairman of the Council be requested to henceforth provide for the minority group leaders to ask one Open Question each before other Council members put Open Questions at meetings of Council.**

GPC/12/38 **In-Year Changes to the Capital Programme**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources which sought Members' views on amending

the Council's Constitution to extend the Executive's authority to add new capital schemes costing more than £500,000 (whole life cost) to the Capital Programme. The meeting noted that such schemes would be either those already on the Council approved reserve list or those where the costs of the scheme would be met by external funding, with this being subject to the associated revenue costs being accommodated within the approved revenue budget for financing the Capital Programme.

In support of the proposal the Deputy Leader and Executive Member reminded the meeting that the Council sometimes received funding from central government which required an almost immediate spend. Unfortunately, delay could arise as the Code of Governance currently required that, whilst new schemes could be added to the Capital Programme, schemes costing more than £500,000 (whole life cost) first required Council approval.

In response to a Member's query the Deputy Leader and Executive Member explained that, under normal circumstances, no further action would be taken with regard to the schemes on the reserve list. However, if slippage occurred on an approved capital scheme, and the Council's borrowing requirement was not likely to be breached, the opportunity could arise for a suitable reserve list capital scheme to be progressed.

#### **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

**that the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution regarding the extension of the Executive's authority to add schemes to the Capital programme, as set out in Appendix A to these minutes, be approved and adopted.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.19 a.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....