

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 29 May 2014

PRESENT

Cllr R C Stay (Vice-Chairman)
(in the Chair)

Cllrs J G Jamieson
D Jones
D J Lawrence
Mrs J G Lawrence

Cllrs K C Matthews
J Murray
R B Pepworth
M A G Versallion

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs A L Dodwell
P Hollick
M R Jones

Substitutes: Cllrs D Bowater (In place of P Hollick)
A Shadbolt (In place of A L Dodwell)

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
R D Berry

Officers in Attendance:	Ms D Clarke	– Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
	Mrs M Clay	– Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer
	Mrs C Jones	– Chief People Officer (Acting)
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr R Gould	– Head of Financial Control
	Mr P Howard	– HR Business Partner – Children's Services
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer

GPC/14/2. **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2014 and 1 May 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

GPC/14/3. **Members' Interests**

Item 7 – Local Government Pension Scheme Update

- a) The following Members declared an interest as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme:

D Bowater
J G Jamieson
A Shadbolt
R C Stay

(Note: The above declarations were made as a precautionary measure. A general dispensation has been approved for all members of the Council under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 allowing them to participate and vote at meetings when an item of business relating to an allowance, payment or indemnity given to all Members is under discussion. Schedule 1 of Part F1 of the Constitution refers);

- b) Councillor D J Lawrence declared an interest as the Deputy Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee (administered by Bedford Borough Council);
- c) Councillor D Jones declared an interest as a member of the Pension Fund Committee (administered by Bedford Borough Council);
- d) Councillor J G Jamieson declared an interest as a member of the of Local Government Pensions Committee (a body of the Local Government Association/Welsh Local Government Association/Convention of Scottish Local Authorities).

Item 8 – Local Government Pension Scheme – Discretions Policy

- a) The following Members declared an interest as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme:

D Bowater
J G Jamieson
A Shadbolt
R C Stay

(Note: The above declarations were made as a precautionary measure. A general dispensation has been approved for all members of the Council under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 allowing them to participate and vote at meetings when an item of business relating to an allowance, payment or indemnity given to all Members is under discussion. Schedule 1 of Part F1 of the Constitution refers);

- b) Councillor D J Lawrence declared an interest as the Deputy Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee (administered by Bedford Borough Council);
- c) Councillor D Jones declared an interest as a member of the Pension Fund Committee (administered by Bedford Borough Council);
- d) Councillor J G Jamieson declared an interest as a member of the of Local Government Pensions Committee (a body of the Local Government Association/Welsh Local Government Association/Convention of Scottish Local Authorities).

GPC/14/4. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

GPC/14/5. **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 A2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

GPC/14/6. **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/14/7. **Local Government Pension Scheme Update**

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Finance Officer which provided an update on recent developments in respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme, explained the governance arrangements in place and outlined the latest financial position of the Fund.

Brief discussion followed.

NOTED

the Local Government Pension Scheme Update.

GPC/14/8. **Local Government Pension Scheme - Discretions Policy**

Members considered a report by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services regarding the requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations for each employer to issue a written policy statement on

how it would exercise the discretions provided by the Scheme as well as to keep them under review and to revise them as necessary.

Members were reminded that in 2012 the Committee had approved the discretions to be applied by Central Bedfordshire Council as a Scheme employer. However, the new Pension Scheme rules which applied from 1 April 2014 required the Council to publish an up to date statement by 30 June 2014 with regard to how it would respond to the discretionary aspects of the Scheme's rules and regulations. To this end the Employer Policy Statement attached at Appendix A to the Director's report set out all of those discretions where the Council was required to have a written policy as advised by Bedfordshire Pension Fund. The document reflected the current discretions which were still required and additional discretions not previously included in the Council's policy that also required a policy decision by the Council as a Scheme employer.

The Chief People Officer (Acting) drew Members attention to a proposed amendment to Appendix A with regard to Regulation R16 (2)(e) & R16 (4)(d).

The 2008 Policy Statement on Employing Authority Discretions, attached at Appendix B to the report, had been annotated to reflect the 2014 amendments.

RESOLVED

that the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 Employer Policy Statement, attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services, and the Policy Statement on Employing Authority Discretions (with 2014 Amendments), as attached at Appendix B to the report, be approved and adopted subject to the following amendment to Appendix A:

Regulation R16 (2)(e) & R16 (4)(d) - the Council's policy to be amended by adding the words 'or an administrative body requirement to do so' to the end of the sentence 'Central Bedfordshire Council will contribute to a shared cost Additional Pension Contribution contract where there is a statutory duty to do so.'

GPC/14/9. Children's Social Worker Recruitment

The Committee considered a presentation by the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations entitled 'Children's Social Worker Recruitment'. The presentation provided essential background on the issues surrounding the recruitment of social workers by local authorities, including the attractions offered by agency employment, and the local efforts being made to increase the in-house recruitment and retention of social workers by Central Bedfordshire Council. The slide pack for the presentation was circulated at the meeting.

A copy of the slide pack is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Full discussion followed. Whilst some confidence was expressed at the measures being implemented by the Council to recruit and develop newly qualified social workers it was also suggested that a monitoring report be submitted to the Committee in six months so that Members were aware of whether or not the aspirations set out within the presentation had been met. In view of the October recruitment intake the Assistant Director suggested that the report be submitted to the December meeting.

NOTED

the presentation by the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations entitled 'Children's Social Worker Recruitment'.

RESOLVED

that a monitoring report be submitted to the General Purposes Committee on 4 December 2014 to enable a comparison between the level of progress made on the recruitment and retention of children's social workers and that envisaged in the presentation made by the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations.

GPC/14/10. Recruitment and Retention of Children's Social Workers

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations informed the Committee that this item had been withdrawn.

GPC/14/11. Market Rate Supplement Payments - Annual Update

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Improvement and Corporate Services which set out an update on the current application of Market Rate Supplements (MRS) to posts across Central Bedfordshire Council. The report provided information covering:

- The percentage of cost of market rate supplements against the total salary bill by directorate
- The number of MRS payments against salary bands
- Staff turnover in the service areas in receipt of MRS.

The meeting was reminded of the difficulties that arose in recruiting experienced, skilled professionals in certain service areas and how MRS payments were required to bridge the gap between the Council's salary levels and the current 'market' rate of pay. In particular Members were aware from a previous item (minute GPC/14/9 refers) of the important role played by MRS payments in social worker recruitment and this was mirrored by the main area for MRS payments being Children's Services.

The meeting noted that the majority of MRS payments were made to front line staff in the middle range and very few were made to those at a managerial level.

RESOLVED

that the annual update on the current application of market rate supplements to posts across Central Bedfordshire Council be received and endorsed.

GPC/14/12. Constitution Update

Members considered a report by the Executive Member for Corporate Resources regarding a number of proposed minor amendments to the Constitution. The meeting noted that the amendments were required to reflect recent internal changes in the internal structure of the Council, to provide greater clarity on certain matters and to reflect changes in the law. In addition there were some typographical errors which required correction.

The meeting was advised of errors that had occurred in Appendix A to the report, which set out the proposed changes referred to above. A replacement second page for the Appendix, which corrected the errors, was circulated for Members' information.

Members were aware that paragraph 2.3 of Part A5 of the Constitution provided that the Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the General Purposes Committee, make any urgent amendments to give effect to any decision of the Council, or changes in the law, and minor amendments such as to correct errors or to ensure that the Constitution was up to date. All of the proposed changes fell within the criteria described in the Constitution so there was no requirement for the Committee to approve them.

NOTED

that, following consultation with the General Purposes Committee as required under paragraph 2.3 of Part A5 of the Constitution, the minor changes to the Constitution as set out in the schedule attached at Appendix A to the report, as amended, will be made.

GPC/14/13. Revised Calendar of Meetings - Eight Week Cycle

The General Purposes Committee considered a report by the Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer which set out the proposed revisions to the Council's adopted Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2014-15.

The Committee noted that the revisions would introduce an eight week cycle for the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the aim of reducing the overall number of meetings without giving rise to a negative impact on effectiveness or efficiency. Discussions on the proposed eight week cycle had been held with senior officers and Members and by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel and support for the proposal had been given.

If adopted, the proposed revisions would be introduced from September 2014. This would allow the full range of changes arising from an eight week cycle to

take effect from the beginning of the September/October cycle of meetings. Members were advised that, as a result of adopting the new cycle, it would also be necessary to reschedule meetings of the Audit and the General Purposes Committees (22 September from the morning to the afternoon, . and 12 March to 5 March respectively). In addition a second meeting of the General Purposes Committee would need to be rescheduled (from 4 December to 20 November) to enable the Chairman to attend in view of his commitments in the December period. A draft revised Calendar of Meetings showing the proposed new meeting dates and those dates previously agreed by Council in January 2014 was attached at Appendix A to the report.

During discussion on the impact of the proposed revisions, reference was made to the presumption that all members of the Development Management Committee, together with nominated substitutes, would attend that Committee's site visits. Concern was expressed that, despite recent amendment to the site visit schedule, clashes remained in the revised Calendar between the site visit dates and those dates proposed for some Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. A request was made that officers ensure that such clashes did not arise when drafting the Calendar of Meetings for 2015-16. Further discussion then took place on the possible impact of the revised meeting cycle on the management of the Council's business.

In response to the concerns raised the Chairman assured Members that their comments had been noted and would be fully considered.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

that the proposed revisions to the 2014-15 Calendar of Meetings, as set out at Appendix B to these minutes, be approved and adopted.

GPC/14/14. General Purposes Committee - Work Programme for 2014/15

Members considered a report by the Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer setting out the Committee's proposed work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year.

The meeting noted that a report on revisions to the Constitution would be submitted to the next meeting on 17 July.

In response to Members' queries the Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer, in her role as the Council's Monitoring Officer, briefly outlined aspects of the content of her forthcoming report on standards complaints to the Committee in July. She referred to the challenges being experienced at some local parish councils and the constraints imposed by the Localism legislation on the sanctions available.

Members were aware that they had recommended the adoption of a revised Calendar of Meetings (minute GPC/14/13 above refers) and that, if the revised dates were approved by Council the Committee's meeting dates in December 2014 and March 2015 would be changed.

RESOLVED

that the proposed General Purposes Work Programme for the 2014/15 municipal year, as attached at Appendix B to the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Services and, be approved subject to the following amendments:

17 July 2014 – add Revisions to Constitution

4 December 2014 – add Children’s Social Worker Recruitment Update.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.37 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated