

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Prior House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 7 December 2017

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (Chairman)
Cllr G Perham (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs A D Brown in attendance
Mrs C F Chapman MBE
J G Jamieson
K C Matthews

Cllrs N Warren
S Watkins
A Zerny

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs R W Johnstone
Cllr B J Spurr
R D Wenham

Substitutes: Cllrs D J Lawrence (In place of R D Wenham)

Officers in Attendance: Mr Q Baker – AD Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)
Miss M Brooks – Committee Services Officer
Mrs V Chapman – Assistant Director People
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Mr J Partridge – Head of Governance
Mr C Warboys – Director of Resources
Mr S Sahota – Deputy Monitoring Officer

GPC/17/24. **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 26 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

GPC/17/25. **Members' Interests**

None.

GPC/17/26. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that there would be two additions to the agenda; an urgent report on proposed amendments for procedures for motions which

would be discussed as agenda item 9 and Members' enquiries which would be discussed as agenda item 10.

The Chairman also advised the Committee that, as a trial, this meeting would be filmed using new software but the meeting would not be webcast.

GPC/17/27. Petitions

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part 4G of the Constitution.

GPC/17/28. 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 Part 4G of the Constitution.

GPC/17/29. Pay Policy Statement 2018/19

The Committee considered a report which set out the details of the Pay Policy Statement 2018/19. The Council was required to adopt the Statement by 31 March 2018.

The Committee was asked to recommend to full Council that the Pay Policy be adopted and published on the Council's website with effect from 1 April 2018.

The Committee noted that there had been no significant changes or direct financial implications from this Pay Policy Statement.

Points and comments included:

- The Chairman noted that the request to include the current pay relationship between the highest paid employee and the Council's median earner and the mean average salary had been measured and included as part of the Pay Policy Statement.
- Confirmation by the Assistant Director of People that any potential pay award would be effective post April 2018 and the new Pay Policy Statement for 2019/2020 would reflect that change.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- 1. that the draft Pay Policy Statement 2018/19, as set out at Appendix A to these minutes, be approved and adopted;**
- 2. that, following approval and adoption, the Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 be published on the Council's website.**

GPC/17/30. **Webcasting Update**

The Committee considered a report on user satisfaction with the existing webcasting platform. Members were asked to consider and comment on the future approach to recording meetings as outlined in the report.

Members discussed and commented on the following in summary:

- The proposed future approach for filming meetings would mean no more live streaming. Concern was expressed by Members that this would not be appropriate for Development Management Committee, Executive and Full Council where public interest means there are a significant number of live views. Members were concerned about losing the feeling of openness and transparency if meetings were no longer live streamed.
- It was acknowledged that the local media often watched webcasts to ensure accurate reporting. If meetings were no longer live streamed the content would be of no use to the media afterwards as it would not be relevant.
- In relation to the user satisfaction survey a Member expressed dissatisfaction with the functionality of the system and wanted a system in place which would allow the Chairman to manage the order of the speakers more effectively. The Head of Governance confirmed that the current system allowed the Chairman to manage the order of speakers but the software was not active. If the software was activated it would require additional staffing resources to manage this process.
- In relation to making the webcasting system more functional it was proposed that it would be beneficial for the Committee to have an understanding of the cost implications associated with implementing this.

RESOLVED

that the decision concerning the future approach to recording meetings be delegated to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and the Leader of the Council in order for a decision to be made prior to the end of the contract with the current provider in January 2018.

GPC/17/31. **Urgent Report - Report on Proposed Amendments for Procedures for Motions**

The Committee considered a report which sought the Committee's approval to amend the Constitution with regards to the procedures for dealing with motions at full Council. The Chairman had accepted the item on the grounds of urgency because of the issues relating to the submission of motions which had arisen at the previous meeting of full Council and which the Monitoring Officer felt needed to be rectified as quickly as possible.

The Committee noted that the proposal would amend Rules 17 and 18 of Part 4A of the Constitution, and that if these amendments were adopted there would be greater clarity to the procedures for debating motions resulting in better decision making.

Points and comments included:

- The Assistant Director Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) advised that, currently, the Rules did not require proposals for amendments to motions to be in writing or to be provided prior to a meeting. His report proposed that a written notice of every amendment to a motion be delivered to the Monitoring Officer not later than 1 clear working day before the date of the meeting. In response, however, Members expressed concern that this proposal could hinder the debate within a meeting. It was also pointed out that proposed amendments were discussed at Group meetings which were held close to the start of a Council. It would be more suitable, therefore to require such amendments to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer prior to the start of a Council for approval rather than 1 clear working day in advance.
- Discussion on the submission of minor amendments and whether it should be a requirement that they should also be submitted in written form. Debate followed on the definition of a minor amendment given that a few words could have a major impact on the meaning of a motion.
- A Member requested that the requirement to have written notice of an amendment to a motion should not include minor amendments.
- Members recognised the need for an amendment to a motion be put in writing in order to allow individuals to digest the implications of the change.
- The Committee was advised that should a proposed unwritten amendment arise during the course of a debate the amendment could still be considered should the Council Procedure Rules be suspended under Rule 27 of Part 4A of the Constitution.

RESOLVED

that Rule 17 of Part 4A of the Constitution be amended, as set out at Appendix B to these minutes, to require proposals for amendments to motions to be provided in writing to the Monitoring Officer prior to a meeting of the Council for authorisation by him and that, on receiving such authorisation, the proposed amendment be circulated in writing to the meeting.

GPC/17/32. Protocol for Member / Officer Relations

The Leader of the Council expressed concern over the variation in response times experienced by Members to their enquiries. He referred to page 9 of Part 5D of the Council's Constitution which stated that officers would make every effort to make a substantive response to such enquiries within 2 working days but if a substantive response could not be provided officers would acknowledge

receipt of the enquiry. He added that this deadline was often ignored and that, at times, there was no response received at all.

Points and comments included:

- Members concurred with the Leader's concern.
- Members noted that, equally, Members should allow officers sufficient time to respond to their enquiries and not continue to contact them for responses.

RESOLVED

that the minutes of this meeting be provided to the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer to ensure that they were aware of Members' concerns regarding the variation in the time taken by officers to respond to Member enquiries and the protocol set out in Part 5D of the Constitution which applies to this issue.

GPC/17/33. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which set out the Committee's work programme.

The Committee was made aware that the item Change to the Constitution, Membership of O&S Committees' would not now be submitted to its meeting in March 2018 as this issue had now been resolved.

RESOLVED

that the Committee's work programme be approved subject to adding an update report on the decision made for the recording of meetings for consideration at its meeting on the 29 March 2018.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.13 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated