

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of General Purposes Committee

28 January 2013 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor	R D Burrett (Chair)
Councillor	C A Cheshire (Vice–Chair)
Councillors	M L Ayling, L A M Burke, D G Crow, C R Eade, R A Lanzer, C A Moffatt, C J Mullins, C G Oxlade and L A Walker.

Also in Attendance:

Mr Andrew Timms	Appointed Independent Person (Observing)
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Officers Present:

Manson Kendall	Principal Lawyer
Mez Matthews	Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Oakley	Electoral Services Manager

17. Members' Disclosure of Interests

The following disclosures of interests were made by Members:-

Member	Minute Number	Subject	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R D Burrett	Minute 19	Review of Special Responsibility Allowances	Personal Interest in the item as he was one of the individuals who would currently be affected by the proposal.

18. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 November 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. Review of Special Responsibility Allowances

At its meeting on 21 November 2012, the Committee had considered report LDS/053 of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which requested the Committee's steer as to whether it was in agreement with a proposal to reduce the number of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payments so that any Member was only paid one SRA. The Committee had been in support of the proposal.

Following that meeting, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services consulted with the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel regarding the proposed change, and each member of the Panel had indicated that they had no objection to the proposal. The matter had therefore been brought back before the Committee with a recommendation to Full Council that the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED

That the Full Council be recommended to agree that the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended with effect from April 2013 to restrict the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to one per Member.

20. Polling Arrangements: Use of Schools

The Committee considered report LDS/059 of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which considered and outlined the use of schools as polling places in the current polling scheme.

The Head Teacher of The Brook School, Maidenbower had stated that she objected to the use of the school as a polling place due to the disruption the closure caused. The Committee considered the objection and the option to amalgamate the two polling districts within Maidenbower so that voting for the entire ward took place at Maidenbower Community Centre. Although the Committee sympathised with the Head Teacher of The Brook School, several Committee members were of the opinion that, due to the layout and size of Maidenbower, the Community Centre would not be easily accessible by the residents in the south of Maidenbower and that the amalgamation of the two polling districts could lead to a lower turnout. The Electoral Services Manager explained that due to the small size and layout of the school it would not be possible to section off part of the school during polling day to allow the school to remain open, and that the Head Teacher had been opposed to that suggestion as she was concerned about security. It was also suggested that The Brook School could align an Inset day with each polling day although it was acknowledged that was not always possible. It was also noted that as The Brook School was the only non-residential building in the south of Maidenbower, there were no other suitable polling places within that area. It was agreed that the Electoral Services Manager should continue to pursue further options for polling district LHB with The Brook School.

The Committee was informed that Grattons Bowls Club was next door to Milton Mount School, had a large car park and offered good access. The Club was able to offer its restaurant as a polling place. The Electoral Services Manager had visited the site with the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and considered that the Club would offer good accommodation. It was noted that Ward Councillors supported a change of polling place from Milton Mount School to Grattons Indoor Bowls Club. The Committee was also in support of the change.

Several Committee members were concerned that Broadfield was only served by one polling place (Broadfield Community Centre) and were of the opinion that it required at least two polling places. It was suggested that the Electoral Services Manager investigate the options for future polling places in Broadfield. The Electoral Services Manager informed the Committee that Broadfield Community Centre was a central location and a member of the Committee stated that turnout had not decreased since the polling places for the two wards had been combined. It was also noted that changing the polling places could increase confusion. The Committee was informed that a review of all polling places / districts would take place in 2014 (in time for the 2015 elections). The Committee considered the proposal to investigate the polling arrangements in Broadfield but it was resolved not to proceed with an investigation at this stage, and it was agreed that the issue would be dealt with as part of the review in 2014.

RESOLVED

1. That the Scheme of Polling Places be altered to replace Milton Mount School with Grattons Indoor Bowls Club as the polling place for polling district LJA.
2. That the officers pursue further options for polling district LHB with The Brook School.

21. Changes to the Constitution

The Committee considered report LDS/058 of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which proposed changes to the Constitution. The Committee noted that further information relating to the proposal to remove the Corporate Equality Scheme from the list of Policy Framework Documents (PFDs) was included in the report, as requested by the Committee at its last meeting.

The Committee agreed that equality issues were important. Several Committee members were of the view that an Equality Scheme should be a Full Council responsibility. It was suggested that the current Corporate Equality Scheme was a high profile comprehensive document and should therefore be retained and updated. It was suggested that the proposed Equality Statement had been condensed too much and was not as informative as the existing Scheme. Several other Committee members were of the opinion that delegation of the Equality Scheme would not dilute the importance of equalities. It was noted that, should the Scheme be removed from the list of PFDs and its approval delegated to Cabinet Members in consultation with officers, any decision taken would be published in the Members' Information Bulletin and would be subject to the call-in procedure.

RESOLVED

That the Full Council be recommended that the amendments to the Constitution proposed in Appendix 1 to these minutes be agreed.

22. Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

R D BURRETT
Chair

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

APPENDIX 1

Function	Proposed amendment	Reason for amendment
Article 4 –The Full Council – Page 16 (Andrew Davies)	Delete “Corporate Equality Scheme” from the list of Policy Framework Documents.	Further information is contained within report LDS/058.
Functions of the Staff Appeals Board – Page 139 (Lucasta Grayson)	Amend the final delegation relating to appeals against dismissal, grading and grievances by employees of the Council to read as follows: <u>“The following function is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Customer and Corporate Services</u> Authority to agree a Compromise Agreement in circumstances where an employee or former employee of the Council has made a claim or has a potential claim against the Council. In addition, where the Compromise Agreement includes an amount of financial compensation, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Customer and Corporate Services, has delegated authority to agree the amount following consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (where the Chief Executive is the subject of the agreement then the Section 151 Officer will replace them in the authorisation process). ”	To bring the delegation in line with the current Pay Policy. Additional wording is shown in bold.
Responsibility for Cabinet Functions –Page 155 (Andrew Davies)	Delete “Corporate Equality Scheme” from the list of Policy Framework Documents.	Further information is contained within report LDS/058.
Policy Framework Procedure Rules – Page 163 (Andrew Davies)	Delete “Corporate Equality Scheme” from the list of Policy Framework Documents.	Further information is contained within report LDS/058.