

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
27 SEPTEMBER 2012

(19:15 TO 21:22)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter McCabe (chair), Janice Howard (vice-chairman), Laxmi Attawar, John Dehaney, Samantha George, Suzanne Grocott, Gilli Lewis-Lavender, Ian Munn and Linda Taylor.

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Paul Evans (Assistant Director Corporate Governance), Mark Humphries (Assistant Director Infrastructure and Transactions), Paul Dale (Interim assistant Director Resources), Brian Thompson (Head of Accountancy), Stephen Bowsher (Corporate Accounting Manager), John Hillarby (Trading Standards Manager), David Ryan (Technical Officer Street Trading), Margaret Culleton (Head of Audit), Marissa Bartlett (Head of Joint HR Transactional Services), Colin Millar (Democracy Services)

ALSO PRESENT: Suresh Patel and Thomas Ball (Audit Commission) – item 4  
Mr E Chillingirian and partner – item 5  
David Coates (Agilisys) – item 7

1 ORDER OF THE AGENDA

With the permission of the meeting the chair took item 5 as the first item.

2 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the public are excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in category 1 of part 4B of the constitution – information relating to an individual. Mr Chillingirian and his partner remained present.

3 NON-RENEWAL OF STREET TRADING LICENCE (Agenda item 5)

The Committee heard from Mr John Hillarby (Street Trading Manager) and Mr E Chillingirian (Licence holder). Once the parties had been heard the room was cleared except for members of the Committee, the Democracy Services Officer and the Assistant Director Corporate Governance and the committee discussed the case.

The parties were brought back into the room and were informed that the Committee had decided not to renew the licence. A decision letter would be sent within the next few days setting out the reasons for the Committee's decision.

Further details of the exempt session are in an exempt minute of this meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Street Trading licence is not renewed for the reasons to be set out in the decision letter.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda item 1)

Councillor Samantha George that she was a member of the Pension Fund Advisory Committee and that she was employed by Grant Thornton.

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Councillor Suzanne Grocott informed the meeting that her employer was involved in New Schools Merton

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 2)

Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender informed the meeting that she would have to be absent for a short period during the meeting. She was absent from the meeting for item 4.

6 FINAL ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORTS  
(Agenda item 4)

The WGA procedures had now been completed and the auditors would be issuing the certificates accordingly.

Councillor Samantha George asked about the large revaluation of land and how this had come about and why the valuation error had not been identified sooner?. The Director responded that the incorrect valuation had been the result of work carried out by a private valuer when we had capacity problems and that their error had not been identified for so long because we only undertook valuations once every five years, relying on indexation in between. The procedures for using such valuations had been strengthened.

Brian Thompson advised the Committee that the duplicates payments issue had been addressed.

The Director advised that in respect of underspends and financial monitoring of budgets more training was being offered to budget managers. Part of the underspending was as a result of managers taking efficiencies as early as possible.

In response to a point in respect of reserves the Audit Commission said that the level of reserves was a matter for the Council. Their position was only that the council should make a determination as part of the MTFS as to what was an appropriate level.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott had raised a number of questions prior to the meeting and these together with the responses were tabled for inclusion in the minutes and these are attached as appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the Audit Commission for its work with the Council over the past years and wished Suresh Patel, Thomas Ball and their colleagues well for the future.

RESOLVED: (1) That the General Purposes Committee approves the audited Statement of Accounts, including the Pension Fund Accounts.

(2) That the General Purposes Committee notes the comments made by the Pensions Fund Advisory Panel in relation to the Annual Pension Fund Accounts 2011/12

(3) That the General Purposes Committee notes the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report for the Council's Pension Fund accounts under the International Standard on Auditing 260 (ISA 260) including the agreed action plan.

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(4) That the General Purposes Committee notes the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report for the Council's main accounts under the ISA 260.

(5) That the General Purposes Committee agrees that the Chair signs the Letter of Representation for the Council's 2011/12 main accounts.

(6) That the General Purposes Committee agrees that the Chair signs the Letter of Representation for the Council's 2011/12 Pension Fund accounts.

7 DESIGNATION OF PARTS OF THE HIGHWAY FOR THE PURPOSES OF STREET TRADING (Agenda item 6)

RESOLVED: (1) That the Buenos Aires pitch is to be monitored during the period of a six month temporary licence operating from 19:00 on weekdays and from noon on Saturdays and Sundays and further report to be made after that time.

(2) That the other designations are agreed.

8 UPDATE AND EVALUATION OF ITRENT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda item 7)

Members discussed the ongoing project implementation with Marissa Bartlett and David Coates.

- There was no additional cost in respect of handling the varied leave arrangements as this was part of the original specification.
- Unforeseen costs mentioned in paragraph 2.5. These had been agreed at the governance board.
- Information requested by Councillors at Council meetings – There were issues with legacy systems and some information such as vacancies not yet being in the system – these issues were being addressed.
- Schools buy back was lower than hoped for.
- paper payslips are produced for about 30% of the workforce (including schools and Members) who do not currently have access to the Council's secure network..70.1% currently have access, hence can view e-payslips via Employee Self Service, each month.

9 IT SYSTEMS FAILURE (Agenda item 8)

Noted

10 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda item 9)

Margaret Culleton gave more detail on Sherwood primary school. The head teacher had requested an audit as the bursar had left suddenly. No fraud had been identified although some procedural matters were identified for improvement. There was a limited assurance but also ongoing regular contact with the school to put in place the necessary improvements.

On the Disabled Facilities Grants procurement the Committee were advised that the practices were not in accordance with Contract Standing Orders. The Committee

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asked that these practices should be halted immediately. The Director of Corporate Services was asked to raise this with Procurement Board and attach the response to the minutes of this meeting. (The response will be attached as appendix 2 to these minutes).

Officers were requested to raise the CCTV contracts issue with the relevant Scrutiny Panel chair.

11 BUSINESS CONTINUITY REVIEW (Agenda item 10)

Noted

12 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 11)

Noted