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## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

6 NOVEMBER 2014

(7.15 PM TO 8.50 PM)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair), Councillor Janice Howard, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Adam Bush, Councillor Tobin Byers, Councillor Abigail Jones, Councillor Ian Munn and Councillor David Williams.

ALSO PRESENT Caroline Holland (Director, Corporate Services), Paul Evans (AD Corporate Governance), Dean Shoemith (Head of HR), Tim Revell (Interim Head of Electoral Services), Andrew Robertson (Principal Electoral Services Officer), Susanne Wicks (Democratic Services Officer)

Paul King and Michael Yates, Ernst & Young

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Mary Curtin and Councillor Stephen Crowe.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

No declarations were made.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes are agreed as an accurate record.

### 4 RECORDING OF NON-KEY DELEGATED EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (Agenda Item 4)

Paul Evans presented this report. He pointed the Committee's attention to the recommendation made by the Standards Committee that the non-key decisions should be subject to call-in. Councillor David Williams urged the Committee to support this principle.

When asked to comment, Paul Evans outlined the possible impact of introducing this measure, both in terms of the work required by democratic services' officers and delays to the decision making process. The Committee, whilst agreeing with Councillor David Williams' suggestion, also noted the need to monitor the implementation of the new process and asked for a report to be brought to the March meeting.

RESOLVED:

- A. To approve the proposed new process for recording and publishing non-key delegated executive decisions in order to comply with the Openness of Local

Government Bodies Regulations 2014;

- B. To recommend to Council that non-key delegated executive decisions made by officers should be subject to call-in;
- C. That the General Purposes Committee should receive a review of the process at the meeting of 12 March 2015;
- D. To recommend the constitutional changes for approval by Council; Paragraph 20.5 should be amended to read "Non-key delegated executive officer decisions are to be subject to call-in".
- E. To recommend the constitutional change regarding filming of council meetings in order to comply with recent legislation.

5 EXTERNAL AUDIT - ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER AND PROGRESS REPORT  
(Agenda Item 5)

Paul King introduced the Annual Audit Letter, and Michael Yates introduced the Audit Progress Report. Michael Yates confirmed that the work on the Housing Benefit and subsidy claim will be complete by the 28 November deadline.

Report received.

6 FEEDBACK ON ACTIONS FROM ERNST & YOUNG WHISTLEBLOWING  
REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

Dean Shoesmith presented this report. Whilst members welcomed the information in a more legible format, they asked that A3 copies be circulated with the main agenda in future.

Dean Shoesmith amended paragraph 2.10 to read "As at 29 September, the Council employed 135 interim workers". He went through each of the recommendations and invited comment and questions.

Dean Shoesmith undertook to bring the new Conflict of Interest policy to this committee in March.

Dean Shoesmith advised that whilst the numbers of temporary placements are reducing, this is not reflected in expenditure, due to the rising costs in recruiting specialist staff such as children's social workers. He also advised that some posts are covered by temporary staff pending the vacancy being filled, but some interim staff are specifically appointed to cover projects, and will remain until the project is complete. Caroline Holland suggested it would be useful to add a column to the spreadsheet to indicate where this is the case and Dean Shoesmith undertook to denote where interim staff are working on a project.

When asked about the numbers of staff, Caroline Holland advised that officers are working on the answer to a Council question about the establishment, the number of vacancies and a list of vacant posts. This information should be available by December.

Councillor David Williams suggested that the remit of the Committee should be to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place, rather than looking at specific details about staff. Councillor Peter McCabe advised that the Financial Monitoring Task Group consider staffing in great depth, but added that this Committee should be challenging officers about these issues.

RESOLVED:

That a further update report should be brought to the Committee in March.

6a FEEDBACK ON ACTIONS FROM ERNST & YOUNG WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT - APPENDIX (Agenda Item 6a)

7 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 7)

The work programme was noted.

8 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (Agenda Item 8)

Tim Revell presented this report and invited comment and questions.

Councillor Ian Munn outlined his concerns about the South Mitcham Community Centre and the scout hall in Cricket Green, particularly with regard to the forthcoming general election.

In response to a question from Councillor David Williams, Tim Revell advised that the Salvation Army building was found to be the most appropriate replacement for Pelham Primary School.

Tim Revell outlined the procedure for the Boundary Commission's review of wards. He undertook to provide Councillor David Williams with the criteria used to trigger a review.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee recommends Council to agree to the revisions of the polling districts and polling places as set out in the review.

9 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER - DELEGATION OF POWERS (Agenda Item 9)

Tim Revell introduced the report.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee recommends that Council agrees to authorise the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to appoint Deputy Electoral Registration

Officers to carry out his powers and duties either in full or in part, in accordance with Section 52(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

10 REVIEW OF PART 4F OF THE CONSTITUTION - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (Agenda Item 10)

Caroline Holland introduced the report.

RESOLVED:

That the General Purposes Committee agrees the revised Part 4F of the Constitution (Financial Regulations).