

**GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 22 MARCH 2007
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 6.00 PM)**

PRESENT: Councillor Alton in the Chair. Councillors Mrs Atkinson, Jean Butterfield, Chapman, de Courcey-Bayley, Goss, Grange, Hawkins, Elwyn Hinchcliffe, Bob Nash, Newby and Charlie Powell.

Late Arrivals: None

Early Departures: None

38/06 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES:

There were no apologies for absence. Notification had been received that Councillor Goss was to act as substitute for Councillor Webber, Councillor Chapman for Councillor Fox and that Councillor Powell was to act for Councillor Williams.

(5.30 pm)

39/06 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: No declarations of interest were made by Members at the meeting. The Member Services Manager confirmed that all Members were entitled to vote on matters concerning Members' allowances.

(5.31 pm)

40/06 - MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 February 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Nine Members voted for the motion and there were three abstentions)

(5.31 pm)

41/06 - EXEMPT INFORMATION: There were no exempt information items.

42/06 - PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS - QUESTIONS: There were no questions to consider pursuant to Standing Order 27.

MATTERS WHICH ARE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION

43/07 - MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES: A report in the name of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services was submitted and the Member Services Manager referred Members to the report of the Independent Panel which was attached as an appendix. He circulated at the meeting a copy of the representations made by Councillor Hawkins which had been presented to the Panel in its deliberations relating to parish councillors serving on Standards Sub-Committee and Standards Committee. In that regard, he drew Members' attention to paragraph 3.2 of the Panel's report. At its meeting on 26 February 2007, the Panel had also considered allowances for Planning Committee members and substitutes.

A full discussion ensued, particularly with regard to the role of the parish

representative on Standards. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised in that regard. Members agreed that it would be useful to establish what allowances neighbouring and Audit Commission comparable authorities made to parish representatives on their standards committee and sub-committee prior to a formal decision on the matter being made by this Council. It was noted that the allowance currently being paid would remain for the time being.

RECOMMENDED:

That (1) a revised special responsibility allowance of (currently) £820 per annum (0.2 of the basic allowance) be made available for all members of the Planning Committee, backdated to 1 October 2006;

(2) no special responsibility allowance be recommended for substitute members of the Planning Committee;

(3) consideration of the co-optee's allowance for that co-opted parish representative serving on both the Standards Committee and Standards Sub-Committee be deferred and the Member Services Manager ascertain such allowances paid by neighbouring and Audit Commission comparable authorities, for report back to the Panel in the first instance; and accordingly

(4) having considered the recommendations of the Independent Panel, the remainder of the Members' Allowances Scheme, as currently shown in section 11 of the Handbook and Constitution be endorsed for application in 2007/08.

(Eleven Members voted for the motion and one against)

(5.32 pm to 5.45 pm)

44/06 - **MEMBERSHIP ON PLANNING COMMITTEE:** A report in the name of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services was submitted and the Officer advised that the formal response on the question of reducing membership on Planning Committee (as raised under General Purposes Committee Minute 36/06) received from the Independent Group was attached as an appendix to the report. The Chair reported that the Leader of the Conservative Group had also recommended that the status quo should remain, as favoured by the Head of Planning Services. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor de Courcey-Bayley, advised that on balance their members had considered that the membership should remain at 16 as it could be difficult to arrange for substitutes were figures to be reduced. Discussion took place with regard to the spread of representation on the committee but it was acknowledged that it was for the Groups to ensure that there was an appropriate balance between the urban areas and rural areas when appointing their members to the Committee.

RECOMMENDED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That the membership of Planning Committee remain at 16.

(5.45 pm to 5.55 pm)