

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26 July 2011

PRESENT: Councillor Hallam (Chair); Councillor Golby (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Beardsworth, Begum, Capstick, Patel and Aziz

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caswell and Parekh.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Committee considered a report on the Work Programme for 2011/12.

The main points of discussion were;-

- Members felt that other issues regarding electoral registration should be considered. In particular a review of where polling stations were sited and their general accessibility. This was a matter that had been raised previously.
- Members were advised that all service areas had been contacted and asked if there were issues that they wished to raise. If Members wished to examine polling stations issues then that should be raised with the Service itself and the Returning Officer who has statutory responsibility for elections.
- The timing of the Health and Safety Monitoring report was questioned. There was some concern that there would be additional Health and Safety implications to workers in the winter due to street lighting changes. However the Head of HR stated that reporting statistics would not be available any earlier. It was considered that any individuals who had concerns over the impact any changes may have should discuss them with their managers.

- The Committee considered that it should receive an update on the impact of the Localism Bill. The Bill is in the stages of being considered by the Lords and the Borough Solicitor advised that the indicative date for the Bills enactment is November 2011, although it could be later. Amendments have been proposed by the Lords and at this stage it is still uncertain what some of the impacts will be. It was emphasised that there will be a significant need for training when the implications are fully known.
- Any direct impacts from the Localism Bill on Planning, Standards etc will be considered by the relevant Committee.
- There was discussion around the Council's Reward and Recognition Strategy. The relevance of external awards in terms of Value for Money was also challenged. Officers felt that external awards, particularly those such as Charter Marks were valued by staff. It was noted that some aspects of the Reward and Recognition Strategy would be covered by the consideration of the People Plan, but it was emphasised that that was a strategic document, not an Action Plan.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

- (1) That the work programme be agreed.
- (2) That the Elections Service and the Returning Officer be asked for an update on the position regarding a potential polling station review, and that response be brought to Committee in September. If appropriate a full report would then be brought to the November Committee.
- (3) That an update report on the impact of the Localism Bill be brought to the November Committee, if appropriate.

The meeting concluded at 6:40 pm