

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 29 January 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Patel (Chair); Councillor Parekh (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, I. Choudary, Golby and
Oldham.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2012 were approved and signed by the Chair.

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. REVISED EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

The Head of Business Change presented a report proposing changes to employment policies affecting payments and benefits (essential car user allowances, the payment of professional fees and the introduction of car parking charges) for Council employees in order to achieve the savings target set for the salaries budget. The effects of the proposals were set out in the report, which also contained a full impact assessment.

Negotiations with recognised trade unions had taken place between November 2012 and January 2013 and the final proposals had been discussed at a meeting with the trade unions on 22 January 2013. It was noted that the trade unions were not minded to accept the proposals. The trade unions accepted that management had undertaken minimal consultation on the proposals and the trade unions would be balloting their members for their views.

In answer to Members' questions the Chief Executive and the Head of Business Change provided information, as summarised below:

- The proposed changes were not contractual ones;
- The removal of essential car users' allowance would achieve the savings required to the staff budget in 2013/14;
- Discussions would continue in 2013/14 regarding the introduction of car parking charges. The charges currently proposed provided discounted parking for employees;
- There had been minimal feedback on the proposal to remove the payment of professional fees for employees. Some local authorities had already taken this action and there had been no resulting impact on those local authorities. If employees paid their own professional fees they could claim this against tax;
- Essential car users would be re-designated as casual users who were required to have their cars available for work. They would continue to receive mileage allowances, which would be paid at the APAX rates, i.e. actual reimbursement of miles travelled without tax being required to be paid on the mileage. Lump sum payments for cars are believed to have been introduced around 1948, when few people had cars but were now considered to be an anachronism. Few concerns had been raised on this issue at the current time;
- The provision of electric cars for Council use had been considered but was not a feasible option at this time. The situation would continue to be looked into;
- Management had sought to produce proposals which would have as little financial impact as possible on employees and there would be tax advantages for some employees as set out above.

RESOLVED:

1. That the removal of the Essential Car User allowance payment for all employees be approved. Employees who receive this allowance would receive 3 months' notice of its withdrawal as stated in their statement of particulars, with notice being given on the 1 February 2013.
2. That the removal of the payment of Professional Fees for all employees, to be introduced from 1 April 2014. be approved.
3. That it be noted that further work will be undertaken with regard to the introduction of a car parking rate for all staff during 2013/14 with the aim of introducing this from 1 April 2014

7. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Approval was sought for proposed changes to polling districts and polling places in Northampton, as set out in the report, as amended following the results of the consultation on the proposals which had been published on 28 January 2013. The comments received as part of the consultation, plus the Returning Officers' responses to those comments, were tabled at the meeting.

The changes were proposed as a result of the publication of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Final Recommendations for County Council Divisions in Northamptonshire, Council's decision on 3 December 2012 to create two

new Parish Councils in the Borough and an evaluation of polling places and stations after the last election. The proposals would reduce the number of polling districts from 135 to 95, the number of polling places by 17 and the number of polling stations by almost 30%. It was also intended to reduce the number of schools used, as they often choose to close fully on polling days, and also to use nursery schools in preference to primary schools.

It was noted that with regard to some of the suggestions made through the consultation, alternative suitable locations had not been identified where respondents had requested that alternative locations be used. Officers would continue to look at potential locations in those areas suggested.

The timing of the Boundary Commission recommendations, the Community Governance Review and the PCC election plus the need to have the new polling districts and stations in place in time for preparations to be made for the County Council elections in May had meant the timescale for producing the report had been tight, hence the tabling of the consultation comments and responses at the meeting.

All Members would be sent copies of maps showing the locations of the new polling districts and polling stations. In addition, polling cards produced for the County Council elections in May would have a sentence on them in red print stating that “your polling station may have changed.”

RESOLVED:

1. That the outcome of the public consultation on the proposals, published on 28 January 2013, be noted.
2. That the proposed changes to the polling districts and polling places within the Borough set out in the report, as amended by the following changes resulting from the public consultation, be agreed in order that preparations can be made for the Northamptonshire County Council election to be conducted on the new county division boundaries:
 - The polling station at Parklands Nursery School and Children’s Centre to remain and be used by electors living in the new polling district of NPLB;
 - The current polling district NKGA not to be combined with polling district NKGB and the polling station to remain as a mobile located in the Pioneer public house car park;
 - The current polling district SNEHC to use a polling station at Blackymore Community Centre, rather than at East Hunsbury Primary School;
 - The new polling district SNEHE to use a polling station at the Abbey Centre, rather than Grangewood Club.
3. That the ability to amend the polling districts, polling places and polling stations as required for operational purposes be delegated to the Returning Officer.

The meeting concluded at 6:25 pm