

General Purposes Committee

Meeting of held on Monday, 19 February 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Chair);
Councillor Appu Srinivasan (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Samir Dwesar, Patricia Hay-Justice, Joseph Lee and
Stella Nabukeera

Also Present: Councillors Alasdair Stewart and Ian Parker

PART A

33/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Fatima Zaman and Lara Fish.

34/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

The Monitoring Officer granted a general dispensation to all Members present at the Committee to enable the consideration of item 6 – Scheme of Members' Allowances.

35/24 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 as accurate records of the proceedings.

RESOLVED:

To vary the order of business to allow for item 5, Amendments to Polling Stations for 2 May 2024 Elections to be considered before item 4 – Croydon Pay Policy Statement 2024-25.

Croydon Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which set out the remuneration of senior staff, designated Chief Officers and lowest paid employees. It also clarified the relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers.

The Chief People Officer, Dean Shoesmith, highlighted the following during his presentation:

- the Appointments and Disciplinary Committee (ADC) had agreed on 15 February 2024, for the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service to be linked to the National JNC Chief Executives Pay Review, which is an annual pay review.
- ADC had the responsibility for approving pay at £100K or more a year for new chief officer posts including chief officers and deputy chief officers, which were not in existence at the time of the publication.
- the post of Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service reflected the application of the JNC Chief Executive National Pay Award which was approved in November 2023.

Members asked if the Pay Statement had been scrutinised to ensure value for money and if the Improvement Assurance Panel (IAP) had been consulted. In response, the officer explained that the Pay Statement had been benchmarked with other London boroughs, to ensure the right balance of affordability and competitiveness in the marketplace to enable Croydon recruit and retain its workforce at various levels. The Chair of IAP had been consulted and no adverse feedback was received.

The officer also clarified that pay below director level or £100K was delegated to the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service and pay above that £100K must be approved by the Council's Appointments and Disciplinary Committee.

RESOLVED: to agree the Council's Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/2025, as set out in the report, appendices and the addendum report and recommends this to Full Council for adoption.

Amendments to Polling Stations for 2 May 2024 Elections

The committee received a presentation from David Courcoux, the Director of Policy, Programmes, and Performance, and Seth Alker, the Head of Elections, on the report which set out the information on the Constituency

Returning Officer's decision to allocate electors to polling stations at the Greater London Authority elections on 2 May 2024 different from the Parliamentary election polling places that were approved by the Council on 27 January 2020 as set out below:

Ward	Polling District	Designated polling station (2020)	New polling station for GLA elections on 2 May 2024	Reason for decision
Bensham Manor	BMR5	Ecclesbourne Primary School Pegasus Trust, Atlee Close, CR7 7FA	Queen's Community Hall, 1 Turner Crescent CR0 2NP	School unavailable. Queen's Community Hall was used as a polling station for the district at the GLA elections in 2021
New Addington North	NAN3	Temporary Polling Station, Car Park, Outside 193-219 Dunsfold Way, CR0 0TR	Goldcrest Community Centre, Goldcrest Way, CR0 0PL	Temporary units unsuitable as polling station venue as result of changes in the Elections Act 2022. Goldcrest Community Centre is the designated polling place for NAN4 polling district and was also used as polling station for NAN3 at the GLA elections in 2021
Selhurst	SEL4	Whitehorse Resource Base, rear Entrance, 80 Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JJ	West Croydon Baptist Church, Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JH	Whitehorse Resource Base no longer available as a polling station.
Shirley North	SHN1	Oasis Academy Primary School, Dining Room, Longhurst Road entrance, CR0 7AR	Woodside Baptist Church Hall, Spring Lane, SE25 4SP	School is unavailable. Woodside Baptist Church Hall is the designated polling station for WDS5 and was also used as polling station for SHN1 at the GLA elections in 2021.
Thornton Heath	TNH7	Spurgeons College, 189 South Norwood Hill, SE25 6DJ	Waterside Centre, 26 Avenue Road, SE25 4DX	Venue unavailable. Waterside Centre is the designated polling station for SND1
Waddon	WDN3	Temporary Polling Station, Waddon Court Road, CR0 4AG	Waddon Leisure Centre, Purley Way, CR0 4RG	Temporary units unsuitable as polling station venue as result of changes in the Elections Act 2022. Waddon Leisure Centre is the designated polling place for WDN4 polling district and was also used as polling station for WDN3 at the GLA elections in 2021
Woodside	WDS6	The Robert Fitzroy Academy, entrance on Northway Road, CR0 6JN	Woodside Christian Centre, 1 Woodside Green, London SE25 5EY	School is unavailable

Members asked why schools were classified as unavailable. Officers explained that the Minister had asked Councils to avoid using schools as polling places due to the effect on students, teachers and parents.

Officers informed the committee that the Greater London Authority (GLA) elections had been fixed for May 2024 and the Council was planning on the basis that it may be a combined election (GLA and general election).

Officers were expecting a definite announcement before 26 March 2024 and arrangements were in place to hold a joint count for Croydon and Sutton at the Excel Centre in East London.

They further stated that as previously agreed, the full statutory review of all polling districts and polling places would be carried out after the May elections during the summer.

Officers also informed Members that one of the Deputy Greater London Returning Officers had confirmed that due to a legal obligation it was not possible on a London, wide basis to provide either turnout or other data on a ward level basis.

RESOLVED to:

- 2.1** Note the changes in the location of some polling stations for the Greater London Authority (GLA) elections on 2 May 2024, compared to the Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections in May 2022.
- 2.2** Note the full list of polling places for the GLA elections on 2 May 2024 and any other elections before the completion of the next statutory review of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix 1 to the committee report.
- 2.3** Note that there would be no changes to polling district boundaries in advance of the completion of the statutory review of polling district and polling places in 2024, the timetable for which was approved by the General Purposes Committee on 9 October 2023.
- 2.4** Note that the Returning Officer, retained the authority to make further alterations to polling places if a venue became unavailable or unsuitable.

Members' Allowances Uplift 2023-24 and Scheme of Members' Allowances 2024-25

The Committee received a presentation on the report from the Head of Democratic Services, Adrian May. The Monitoring officer, Director of Legal Services, Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense and Deputy Monitoring Officer Looqman Desai were in attendance.

The Monitoring Officer granted a general dispensation to all Members present to enable the consideration of the report.

The Head of Democratic Services took the Committee through the report and Members asked questions and discussed the recommendations at length. Some Members felt that due consideration should be given to the recommendation in the Independent Panel Report while others felt that the proposed 3.88% increase in Members' allowances was unacceptable in light of the Council's financial situation, the increase in council tax and the impact of the cost of living crisis on local residents.

Members expressed concerns that if the inflation increase was not applied, it may be compounded in future and make it difficult for the Croydon's Scheme which was already behind, to catch up with other schemes nationally. Additionally, Members felt that not agreeing the increase would impact negatively on those from financially restrained backgrounds and discourage new entrants into the field of politics and public service.

The Chair felt that there was not broad support for the 3.88% increase to the Scheme and Members amended the recommendations which was put to the vote and the Committee **RESOLVED to:**

- 2.1** give due consideration to the Independent Panel Report on the Remuneration of Councillors in London for 2023 ("Remuneration Report") including the recommendation that all member allowances should be updated annually in line with the percentage pay award agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services Staff.
- 2.2** agree that no increase be applied to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24;
- 2.3** agree the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/25 (Appendix 2 which shows track changes from the 2023/24 scheme).
- 2.4** agree that the Director of Legal Services be authorised to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the 2024/25 Members' Allowances Scheme and make all necessary updates to the Constitution; and,

- 2.5** to undertake a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in 2024 to further consider the remuneration report and feedback received on the Scheme, with the aim of the review coming back to the Committee in November 2024.

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Urgent Business (if any)

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.17pm.