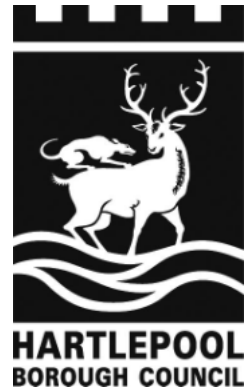


GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA



Monday 5 March 2012

at 2.00 pm

in Committee Room A, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE:

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Cook, James, Lawton, Loynes, Simmons, Thomas and Wells.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011.

4. ITEMS REQUIRING CONSIDERATION

4.1 Request for Observers to Attend Appeal Hearings – *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*

5. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

5 December 2011

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Rob Cook (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Marjorie James, Trisha Lawton,
Chris Simmons and Ray Wells.

Officers: Alyson Camen, Legal Services Manager
Lorraine Bennison, Principal Registration and Members'
Services Officer
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

39. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Akers-Belcher.

40. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

41. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2011

Confirmed.

42. Matters arising from the minutes

The Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer confirmed that there had been no comments received in relation to the Parliamentary Constituencies Review (minute 37 refers).

43. Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations *(Legal Services Manager)*

The report sought approval for a report to be submitted to Council upon the conclusion of the review of polling districts, polling places and polling

stations. The Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer provided clarification on a number of points raised by Members.

During the discussions Members suggested the following:

Proposed Polling District BC – include the use of either the West View Community Centre or West View Project as the proposed polling place.

Proposed Polling District EE – confirm the use of a portable unit to be located in Moorhen Road as there were no alternative fixed locations available within that district.

Proposed Polling District JE – amend to indicate that the Golden Flatts site would be used as a proposed polling place as this provided the option of using the building previously utilised as a caretaker's bungalow or the education development centre.

Members reiterated their concerns with the accessibility of portable units. The Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer reassured Members that all portable units would be sited correctly and equipped with properly constructed ramps.

The Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer highlighted that in light of the elections to be held in November 2012 for the Police Commissioner, all polling places would need to be reviewed to ensure they were suitable to be used at that time of year, ie properly lit.

Members were informed that appropriate publicity of the changes to polling district, polling places and polling stations would be undertaken, including articles in the Hartlepool Mail and Hartbeat Magazine (March Edition) as well as being highlighted on the poll cards delivered to every household.

The hard work and commitment of Members of General Purposes Committee in progressing this review was acknowledged.

Decision

That the report detailing the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations be submitted to Council for approval, incorporating the minor amendments noted above.

43. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

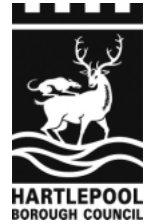
None.

The meeting concluded at 4.22 pm

CHAIR

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

5 March 2012



Report of: Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer

Subject: REQUEST FOR OBSERVERS TO ATTEND APPEAL HEARINGS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To request that Council and Trade Union officers be allowed to attend General Purposes (Appeals & Staffing) Committee hearings as non-participating observers when considering employment based appeals from employees.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The General Purposes (Appeals & Staffing) Committee hear final stage appeals primarily with regard to discipline, redundancy dismissal and grievance, although other employment matters can be considered. The process, format and respective roles and responsibilities of the various parties who attend are formally documented.

2.2 The Disciplinary Procedure includes the following clause:

Representation and Attendance

The normal procedure will be for the employee plus one representative, and the manager plus one personnel representative, to attend the hearing and present their cases. Witnesses will be called in, in turn, to give evidence and will then leave the hearing. It is at the discretion of the Committee to permit either party to bring additional representatives/managers and to decide whether they may attend in an observer or participant capacity.

3. PURPOSE OF THE REQUEST

3.1 The resources of both the HR Team and Trade Unions are becoming more restricted resulting in Council and Trade Unions officers

undertaking a wider range of work with an associated need to increase skills and knowledge. In-house opportunities for training and development are maximised wherever possible and being able to observe a hearing would contribute to both Council and Trade Unions officers understanding of the process.

- 3.2 There are number of hearings scheduled in the coming weeks which would provide invaluable opportunities for both Council and Trade Unions officers to learn from the current cases where the practices and procedures that they are applying are being considered by Elected Members.
- 3.3 Council officers particularly, are responsible for contributing to the production of information or managing processes which may be considered at the hearing and therefore having the opportunity to observe proceedings would help reinforce and clarify for the Officer the emphasis placed on such evidence at a hearing. Additionally, attending as an Observer would allow less experienced team members to better understand the respective roles and processes in anticipation of being required to attend a Hearing whether this is to support a management case or attend as a witness. This contributes to the Council's aim of "growing our own" and developing staff.
- 3.4 Often recommendations are made by the Panel in relation to future practice that they would wish to see adopted e.g. the conduct of investigations, procedures followed, etc., and attending as an observer would give the opportunity to provide Council and Trade Union officer with a better understanding the of the importance of Appeal Panel requirements and the procedures that are applied.

4. WHEN AN OBSERVER MIGHT NOT ATTEND

- 4.1 It is appreciated that all cases are extremely sensitive and it is recognised that the employee and their TU representative should have the opportunity to object to an observer being present for personal reasons, previous involvement in the case, etc. The Trade Unions have confirmed that they do not have any objections to this request. Observers would not be present during the Panel's deliberations and would leave at the same point as the Appellant and Management parties.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 General Purposes Committee members are recommended to agree in principle to observers being allowed to attend General Purposes (Appeals & Staffing) Committee hearings subject to the Chair of each individual Panel considering any objections that might be raised.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

Joanne Machers
Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
Level 3
Civic Centre
Tel: 01429 523003
Email: joanne.machers@hartlepool.gov.uk