

## COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

4<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Present: Councillor Wylie (Chair)  
Councillor D Scudder (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors I Brown, Counter, Hastrick, Mann, McGovern, Razzaq  
and Mrs Punter

CF07-  
06/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

There were no apologies for absence or changes of membership.

CF08-  
06/07 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

CF09-  
06/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006 were submitted and signed.

CF10-  
06/07 **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS POLICY**

The Deputy Head of Human Resources presented the report on the Alcohol and Drugs Policy. He said that he proposed a change of wording to the fourth bullet point of page two of the policy to read:

*“The use of substances, including alcohol and prescribed medication, in circumstances other than those outlined above, must be restricted by the individual to an appropriate level. In determining this level, the individual should consider all relevant factors such as the effect of the substance on work performance, and the impression given to colleagues and members of the public while under its influence. People occupying certain posts are specifically excluded from consuming alcohol immediately before or at any time when the negative effects of alcohol consumption or drug misuse will impair the ability for an individual to fully perform their duties. In situations where a manager/supervisor has reasonable grounds to suspect that an employee is not fit for duty they will be required at the time to explain their condition and they may be suspended from duty on pay. The examples of posts requiring special consideration are as follows.....”*

Members agreed to the change of wording. The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members. One Member raised the matter of random drug/alcohol testing as mentioned in the report. She asked if the Occupational Health nurses would be trained in carrying out the testing and how the process would be managed. The Deputy Head of Human Resources said random testing would be carried out only as a last resort where they believed there was

an on-going problem. The Occupational Health nurses would advise on the best people to carry out the testing and he reminded Members that the employee would still have the right to refuse to be tested. The Chair said there would be strict procedures which would need to be followed if this option was used. The disciplinary procedure could also only be followed if the situation could not be resolved by other means.

A Member sought clarification on the line managers' and supervisors' role in identifying the problems. The Deputy Head of Human Resources said managers would not be asked to make a medical diagnosis, but to seek medical advice when they had noticed a behaviour change or problem. The Corporate Director for Better Council said this would help managers to be able to take action.

A Member asked about sick leave with regard to employees on prescribed medicine who were therefore unable to work. The Deputy Head of Human Resources said all employees who were unable to work were subject to the same sickness/absence management policy. She asked that the wording of the report be amended to make this clearer. The Chair suggested and Members agreed that the last sentence of paragraph two on page three in 'prescribed medicines' be amended to read: "*Where this is not possible employees should take sick leave as per the conditions of service.*"

A Member suggested that training for managers should be mandatory, to which other Members agreed. The Chair suggested amending the words of the fourth bullet point under 'education and training' to read: "*Maintain the level of internal awareness via mandatory training, refresher and inductions packages.*"

It was also agreed that a correction to the sentence in the penultimate bullet point on page two would be made to read: "*The safety of staff and of all those who may be affected by our operations is paramount and to those ends the Council retains the right to, if justified, introduce random drug/alcohol testing.*"

RESOLVED –

that the alcohol, drugs and other substances misuse at work policy be adopted with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 subject to the Committee's amendments.

CF11-  
06/07

## **NO SMOKING POLICY**

The Deputy Head of Human Resources presented the report on the No Smoking Policy. The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

Members supported this policy but recognised how difficult it would be for smokers. One Member asked how this would be managed in terms of support for employees. The Deputy Head of Human Resources said the Council had liaised with the Primary Care Trust and would offer support to individuals through programmes and clinics. The Council was also looking to hold clinics on site in the future as part of the One Watford Partnership. The Corporate Director

for Better Council said that the PCT clinics currently available were outside work time. The Council's Occupational Health sessions on smoking cessation would be held in work time. This was part of the Council's commitment to support employees who wished to give up smoking. Managers would be encouraged to be supportive and also to make common sense judgements about the number of sessions that employees could attend.

Another Member asked how this policy would be enforced, especially in terms of locations other than the Town Hall where there may be safety issues for staff in asking the public not to smoke. The Corporate Director for Better Council said the issue needed further research to ensure appropriate advice was given to frontline staff especially in outlying facilities in the town. She would expect any staff to politely remind the public of the Council's policy but not to get involved in any situation putting their own safety at risk. Other Members asked how the policy would be enforced as people left buildings. The Deputy Head of Human Resources said there would be signage explaining that the area was a no smoking zone and that the policy would only be effective if visitors and contractors respected it.

In response to a question from a Member, the Corporate Director Better Council said it would be unlikely that staff would congregate to smoke outside neighbouring buildings as this currently generally occurred when staff went out to smoke during working hours which would no longer be allowed. She said the policy had already been cascaded to all managers and was supported by Unison.

**RESOLVED –**

1. that the No Smoking Policy be adopted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007
2. that further research be carried out into support for staff enforcing the policy with particular regard to visitors and contractors.

CF12-  
06/07

**INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES FOR STAFF AND MEMBERS AND PARKING SPACE ALLOCATION POLICY**

The Transport and Projects Manager presented the report on the introduction of car parking charges for staff and councillors and parking space allocation policy. The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

Members supported the adoption of a charging policy. A Member asked if someone who worked in two locations, Clarendon Road and the Town Hall, for example, would be able to park in two different car parks as appropriate. The Transport and Projects Manager said the current policy did not allow for this as only one car park would be allocated to each person. Other Members expressed concern at this and it was agreed that where employees and Members regularly had to work between two locations, the possibility of being able to use two car parks be considered.

A Member said that, with regard to the allocations policy, employees who worked regularly in the evening should be allocated a space in the town hall as

she felt it would not be a good use of officer time to collect a car from Sutton car park before the evening work started. The Chair and other Members agreed that it would also not be safe for lone or vulnerable workers to walk to Sutton car park late in the evening. It was agreed that a core section of staff who regularly worked in the evening would be considered for allocation at the Town Hall.

In response to questions from Members about staff nominating car free days, the Transport and Projects Manager said that only the entry system at the Town Hall car park could stop entry on nominated days. Part time workers would be able to park either at Sutton car park, the Avenue or the Town Hall. In response to a question on restricting parking for those living close to the Town Hall, she explained that due to individual circumstances, for example, those with caring responsibilities, it would not be practical to say that all employees living within one mile would not have a space allocated. The Transport and Projects Manager said the implementation of charging on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 would give employees three months notice and would coincide with other initiatives in the Green Travel Plan.

Members also discussed the charge for Councillors and agreed that Portfolio Holders should pay a higher rate than other Councillors as they generally made more visits to the Town Hall. The Chair suggested that Portfolio Holders should pay Band E which was based on using the car park once a week.

RESOLVED –

that the car parking charges for staff and councillors and the parking space allocation policy be adopted from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 subject to the Committee's amendments.

Chair  
Council Functions Committee

The meeting started at 7.30 pm.  
and ended at 9.05 pm

f – 13/12 (LJ)