

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee was held on 27 September 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor Clark (Chair), Councillors J A Jones, McPartland, Mawston, Mrs H Pearson and Porley.

OFFICIALS: B Baldam, J Bennington, D Clemmet, C Davies, R G Long, R Painter and P Slocombe.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: District Auditor, Audit Commission: S Nicklin and R Walker.

****PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** Councillors Brady and N J Walker.

**** AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Elder.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Mawston	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Polling Station and Polling District Review in so far as it related to Marton Community Centre, Cypress Road as Chair of the Marton Community Centre Group

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee held on 28 June 2006 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2005/2006

Mr S Nicklin (District Auditor, Audit Commission) presented the Annual Governance Report 2005/2006, which had been formulated in accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice for Local Government bodies and other associated legislation and guidance.

As part of the Auditor's responsibilities there was a requirement to review and report on the Council's financial statements and whether the Council had made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Annual Governance report summarised the significant findings; conclusions and recommendations arising from the audit work undertaken.

In overall terms it was stated that the audit had shown a marked improvement from the previous year and only two recommendations had been suggested and included in an Action Plan as follows: -

- a) 'improve processes for ensuring that any technical issue raised during the year is evaluated and necessary action taken prior to producing the financial statements to ensure the accounts presented for approval are prepared in accordance with appropriate guidance and legislation and free from significant error;'
- b) 'develop and implement an effective Audit Committee to further strengthen the Council's governance arrangements'.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted and approved.

2. That all concerned be thanked for their efforts in achieving a marked improvement resulting in a positive report.

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES – LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL GOVERNORS – APPOINTMENTS

A report of the Head of Education Policy and Resources was presented regarding vacancies for Local Authority appointed School Governors which had arisen as a result of resignations, the expiry of terms of office or the removal of Governors due to non-attendance.

It was noted that there were currently 7 vacancies out of a total of 142 Governorships for LEA representatives, which equated to 4.9 %.

The nominations received for such vacancies were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report submitted and in an updated report circulated at the meeting.

ORDERED that the following appointments be approved for a four-year term of office with effect from 27 September 2006: -

<u>School</u>	<u>Governor</u>
Berwick Hills Primary	Rev. Canon Hodgson
Brambles Primary	Mr E Johnson
North Ormesby Primary	Mrs D McNally Mr A Kirkbride
Pallister Park Primary	Mr A F Gaw
Park End Primary	Mrs L McGloin
King's Manor Secondary	Mr A F Gaw Mr S Quiiun

POLLING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES – POLLING STATIONS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report which following Member consultation outlined proposed changes to polling district boundaries and the locations of some polling stations as shown in Appendix A of the report submitted. A current list of polling stations was shown in Appendix B of the report submitted.

Reference was made to the Electoral Administration Act 2006, which required local authorities to review polling districts and polling places at least once in any four-year period. The Sub-Committee was reminded of the last review of polling district boundaries and polling stations, which had taken place in January 2003 when consideration had been given to the availability of suitable premises, which could be used for voting purposes.

It was reported that since the May 2003 elections the number of electors voting by post in Middlesbrough had increased by over 480% to approximately 9,250. The Committee was advised that prior to elections in May 2007 the availability of postal voting would be well publicised to all electors.

The Committee considered the schedule of proposals together with subsequent comments received from Members since the circulation of the report and a plan circulated at the meeting.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That no changes be made to the current polling districts and polling stations in respect of the Ayresome, University, North Ormesby & Brambles Farm, Linthorpe, Park, Pallister, Park

- End, Beckfield, Brookfield, Kader, Ladgate, Stainton & Thornton, Coulby Newham, Marton West and Nunthorpe Wards.
2. That the current polling station in AC in the Middlehaven Ward be relocated from St. Stephen's Church Hall to Abingdon Road School.
 3. That polling district CC in the Gresham Ward be divided along the centre of Parliament Road with north of Parliament Road voting at St. Aidan Christian Centre, Clifton Street and the remaining part to continue to vote at Ayresome School.
 4. That the current polling station in HA of the Clairville Ward be relocated from St. Edward's Primary School to Grove Hill Branch Library.
 5. That in respect of the Thorntree Ward, Thorntree House, Chesterwood, Canewood, Cobblewood, Creekwood and Cemetery Lodge, Cargo Fleet Lane be relocated from polling district JA to JC.
 6. That polling district KB in the Acklam Ward be divided as follows:-
 - a) west of centre of St. Mary's Walk to polling district KA to vote at Acklam Branch Library;
 - b) east of St. Mary's Walk to polling district KC to vote at the Scout Headquarters, Tollesby Road.
 7. That the current polling station for LB in the Beechwood Ward be relocated from Beechwood School to Grove Hill Methodist Church, Marton Road.
 8. That in respect of the Marton Ward:
 - a) the current polling station for RB be relocated from St. Andrew's Church Hall to Marton Community Centre, Cypress Road;
 - b) that the polling district boundary between RA and RB be amended so that electors in Scotforth Close, Thurnham Grove, Galgate Close, Shevington Grove and Brindle Close would be in RB and so vote at Marton Community Centre.
 9. That an additional polling station be reinstated in the Hemlington Ward at Viewley Hill Primary School, Cass House Road to serve electors in that part of TB south of Viewley Hill Avenue and east of Cass House Road together with that part of TC that includes all the roads off Earls Court Road.

ELECTION PILOT 2007

Following consultation with Members, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on the possibility of the Council participating in an election Pilot in May 2007.

In an effort to identify different electoral methods with a view to increasing voter turnout the Government had previously sanctioned a number of election pilots for which the Council had participated in, namely; the Mayoral election in 2002 which was conducted as an all postal ballot and likewise the European election.

It was suggested that the Council should not participate in an election pilot having regard to the following: -

- new statutory provisions in force relating to elections;
- it would be the first time the Council would be holding full Council elections and a Mayoral election on the same day;
- it would also be the first major election since the Council had new electoral software installed.

ORDERED that the Council elections and the Mayoral election in 2007 be conducted as a traditional ballot.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL LETTER 2005/2006

In a report of the Members' Office Manager the Committee was informed of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2005/2006 as shown in Appendix 1 of the report submitted which commented on the performance of the Council in respect of complaints to the Ombudsman.

Although there had been a slight increase in complaints to the Ombudsman compared to 2004/2005, with the largest single increase relating to housing services, the number of complaints received was still fewer than in each of the previous two years.

It was considered that the Ombudsman's Annual Letter had demonstrated that the Council was performing well in respect of complaints to the Ombudsman. One contributory factor was that the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure appeared to be more effective and robust, and that most complaints relating to the Council services were dealt with internally and to the satisfaction of the complainant. Of those that were progressed to the Ombudsman it was noted that only in a minority of cases had the Ombudsman required further action from the Council.

The Committee was advised that of more concern related to the general liaison arrangements with the Ombudsman Office and the new procedures with respect to investigators, which appeared to be less effective and efficient than previously the case. It was intended to monitor such arrangements and report further to the Committee following the receipt of the next Annual Letter from the Ombudsman.

In overall terms, it was considered that the Ombudsman had been generally positive both in respect of the process and outcomes relating to complaints.

NOTED AND APPROVED

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2005/2006

A report of the Director of Resources was presented regarding the audited 2005/2006 Statement of Accounts which included extracts from the audited Statement of Accounts providing details of the main accounting financial statements. A copy of the full statement had been provided to Members.

Details were provided of alterations which had been made from the draft which were mainly presentational matters, which ensured complete compliance with revised Statement of Recommended Practice requirements and Best Value Accounting Code of Practice.

It was confirmed that there were no major issues raised by the District Auditor and significant improvement had been made from the previous year in the production of the 2005/2006 Statement of Accounts.

The report referred to the main components of the Accounts as follows: -

Appendix A – Consolidated Revenue Account
Appendix B – Consolidated balance Sheet
Appendix C – Housing Revenue Account
Appendix D – Statement of Internal Control.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the revised 2005/2006 Statement of Accounts be approved.
2. That all concerned be thanked for their efforts in achieving the significant improvements resulting in a positive report.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Resources presented a report on the Annual Report on Treasury Management relating to the management of the Authority's cashflow, its borrowing and investments, in such a way as to control the associated risks and to achieve a high level of performance or return consistent with those risks.

The report detailed the previous year's activity; information on performance against agreed targets and an update on progress towards the current year's Capital Financing programme.

Specific reference was made to Capital Financing activity during 2005/06 which achieved budgetary savings for 2005/06 and future years. The average borrowing rate had been reduced from 7.259% to 5.299% although most of such savings had resulted from the restructuring exercise carried out during 2004/05 as previously reported to the Committee in the 2004/05 report.

Specific reference was made to the Treasury Management operation, which was controlled and set out in the Treasury Management Practices (TMP) policy document. TMPs were approved by Members on the basis that, in certain circumstances, the Director of Resources could vary them, providing that such variations were subsequently reported.

It was reported that the TMP covering segregation of responsibilities and dealing arrangements had been amended to include the provision for all the administration staff to be able to deal on the Money Markets.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the Annual Report on Treasury Management be approved.
2. That the changes to the Treasury Management Practices as outlined in sections 20 and 21 of Appendix 1 of the report submitted be approved.