



## **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**MEETING** : Monday, 15th July 2024

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Hilton (Chair), S. Chambers (Vice-Chair), A. Chambers, Chambers-Dubus, Lewis, Norledge and Wilson

### **Others in Attendance**

Graham Russell, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
Jon McGinty, Managing Director  
Policy and Governance Manager  
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

### **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

1.1 The Committee noted the appointments made by Annual Council of Councillor Hilton as Chair and Councillor S Chambers as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

4.1 There were no public questions.

### **5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

5.1 There were no petitions and deputations.

### **6. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

6.1 Mr Graham Russell, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel presented the report. He explained that the Panel had been approached in May to consider payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance for a newly created Member role which would support Cabinet Members on special

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projects and the maximisation of commercial income. Based on the evidence provided at the time relating to the role having engagement with the Leader, Deputy Leader and other Cabinet Members, and following an in-depth conversation with the Leader of the Council regarding the relationship of this role and that of normal Cabinet business, the Panel was recommending that a Special Responsibility Allowance equal to that of Committee Chair's should be applied to the role, to be backdated to 20 May 2024.

- 6.2 Mr Russell noted that the role could be perceived as an Executive role and the post-holder should therefore not be a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He stated that the Panel would wish to review this role after a reasonable period of operation.
- 6.3 In response to a question from Councillor A Chambers, Mr Russell advised that similar positions existed in a number of authorities. The Panel had looked at the role descriptions and allowances for these posts and believed their recommendations were at the correct level given the size and complexity of the City Council and these were in line with other authorities who had similar roles.
- 6.4 In response to a question from Councillor S Chambers and whether the post should be subject to questioning at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Mr Russell stated that the Panel had not explored the detailed working of all the councils which had equivalent roles and how they would interact with Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.5 The Chair stated that the individual currently appointed to the role did not serve on Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He commented that he had been satisfied with the proposal to call the role a 'Portfolio Advisory Member'. He added that the individual Councillor was a member of the Airport Board and would attend relevant internal meeting with a view to to generating more income for the Council and forward thinking ideas. He noted that the role was instead of appointing an eighth Cabinet Member and he proposed that the recommendations be amended to require a report to be produced at the end of the year detailing the Portfolio Advisory Member's contributions.
- 6.6 In response to Councillor Lewis' assertion that the postholder should be scrutinised via questioning and produce a six-monthly report if they were to receive an allowance, the Chair pointed out that other remunerated roles, such as Group and Deputy Group Leaders, were not subject to any scrutiny.
- 6.7 Councillor Dubus-Chambers commented that she understood blue-sky thinking and the review of policies to be the role of the relevant Cabinet Member. Whilst she appreciated that there was a need to obtain sufficient information regarding Gloucestershire Airport, she raised concerns that the Council already had a substantial overspend and should not be creating more roles when individuals were in post who should be undertaking the work.
- 6.8 The Chair stated that he believed the proposal to be the most cost-effective way to deal with the issues and to generate a better commercial income for

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the Council. The alternative would be to create eight Cabinet Members which would be more onerous on the Council's budget. He explained that a larger Cabinet was necessary to ensure Cabinet Members were not overloaded. He noted that the Portfolio Advisory Member would be critical to achieving a better understanding of the financial implications involved.

- 6.9 Councillor A Chambers asked questions about the suitability and experience of the individual appointed to the role and noted the increased costs associated with adding it to the already increased Cabinet, which the Chair stated were not not relevant to the decision about whether an allowance should be attached to the role.
- 6.10 Councillor Wilson asked the Committee to support the proposal and recommended that the post to be reviewed in 12 months' time. He believed the post would be successful and the Council would have the opportunity to determine the effectiveness of this role.
- 6.11 The Vice Chair commented that as the post would be influencing decisions made by the Cabinet, it should be subject to regular reports and questioning in line with Chairs of Committees. She added that it would be difficult to determine whether the post would generate more income and how this would be monitored and reported. She requested that the Chair reconsider the post if it had not demonstrated that it had generated more income than it cost.
- 6.12 The Chair advised that there would be a number of aspects to the role, including involvement in transforming Council services. He agreed that the role should be reviewed within the 12-month period and that there should be an opportunity to question the postholder when their written report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but maintained that the relevant Cabinet Member would respond to any questions at Council as the Portfolio Advisory Member would not make any decisions.
- 6.13 In response to a question from Councillor A Chambers about whether similar positions were subject to questioning at Council, Mr Russell advised that the Panel had been unable to explore all the equivalent roles in greater depth due to the timescales, but had looked at equivalent posts to ensure the Panel's recommendations were in line with other local authorities.
- 6.14 Councillor A Chambers requested that information relating to other equivalent roles nationally could be collated and made available when the report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time and Mr Russell agreed to include this in the Panel's review.
- 6.15 General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Council:
- (1) The recommendations contained in the Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Appendix 1) be approved.
  - (2) The agreed title for the role is 'Portfolio Advisory Member'.

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- (3) The post-holder be required to prepare a report on their activities, bi-annually in the first year of operation and annually thereafter, which will be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should they wish to include it in their Work Programme.

**7. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

- 7.1 The Chair advised that he was inviting suggestions for areas of the Constitution that the Committee may wish to review. He proposed two areas for review:
- 1) Questions to Cabinet Members. Formerly there had been an opportunity to ask verbal questions without notice, which had been revised by the previous administration, so that written questions had to be submitted in advance. Some Members had asked for this to be reviewed and for verbal questions only to be reinstated.
  - 2) Drafting of motions to Council. Recently, a number of motions had been exceptionally long and lacked clarity about what the Council was being asked to agree to. The Chair suggested training be provided to Councillors on drafting motions and suggested that a word limit could be imposed to ensure motions were clear and succinct.
- 7.2 The Vice Chair supported the need for Members to receive training on drafting motions and suggested a template be designed with a recommended word limit, but noted that Members of the Council were representative of their communities and by restricting motions to a word limit would seem unfair as each individual had different abilities.
- 7.3 Councillor A Chambers stated that imposing a word limit would be unfair to Members to whom writing motions may not come naturally.
- 7.4 Councillor Wilson agreed that training would be beneficial, but added that it should not be compulsory.
- 7.5 Councillor Chambers-Dubus agreed that training would be helpful but should not be mandatory. She said that it would be useful to have a template available and that it might assist with ensuring the motions contained the necessary information but were not excessively long.
- 7.6 Councillor Lewis agreed that no word limits should be imposed, but accepted that some motions lost their effectiveness due to the volume of information, some of which could instead be saved for the debate. With regard to questions to Members, he stated that a more detailed response could be provided for a written question than for a verbal question.
- 7.7 The Chair suggested that Democratic Services write to each Member to ascertain their preference regarding verbal or written questions for the Committee to review at the next meeting. He agreed that a template to help draft a motions would be useful, along with an advisory word limit.

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- 7.8 Councillor Lewis suggested reviewing previous motions to determine an appropriate form and advisory word limit.
- 7.9 The Vice Chair advised that she preferred written questions in advance, but highlighted the impact of preparing responses on the day-to-day work of Members and officers. She added that it was important that members of the public can understand motion and they should be given the opportunity to view this in writing and then watch them be debated.
- 7.10 **RESOLVED** that General Purposes Committee consider proposals for these areas of the Constitution discussed at their next meeting.

**Time of commencement: 5.00 pm hours**  
**Time of conclusion: 5.55 pm hours**

**Chair**