

## SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN PART I

**MEETING:** **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Thursday 29 August 2013 6pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN**

**MEMBERS PRESENT** J Thomas (Chair), J Brown, S Speller, H Tessier and S Walker.

**ALSO PRESENT** The Leader, Councillor S Taylor OBE CC, S Hollingsworth

**THE AGENDA ITEMS REFERRED TO IN THIS SUMMARY OF DECISIONS MAY BE INSPECTED AT THE RECEPTION OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES, DANESHILL HOUSE.**

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<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Cherney-Craw, G Clark, M Hearn, R Parker CC and B Underwood.  There were no declarations of interest.	G Moody Ext 2203
<b>2. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR</b>	
The Chair outlined the scope and purpose of the meeting and lead roles for questioning were allocated.	
<b>3. MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JULY 2013</b>	
It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting held on 29 July 2013 be approved	G Moody Ext 2203

<p>as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p><b>4. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES AND HOSPITALITY.</b></p>	
<p>Introductions were made and the Chair welcomed the Leader, the Constitutional Services Manager, the Member Services Officer and the 'Critical Friend', Stephen Hollingsworth, to the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee then asked a number of questions relating to Members' Expenses.</p> <p><b>Key Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was debate over the provision of refreshments for meetings and the Leader requested that Members advise Member Services in good time of the requirement to specify a need for sandwiches.</li> <li>• The Leader made a case for the use of flights to the tripartite meeting in Autun which was acknowledged by the Committee</li> <li>• The Committee was advised that the Town Twinning activities might be given a low priority by townspeople in consultation events.</li> <li>• There was an inequality in the number of Members attending conferences and the purpose of conferences was often inadequately explained. It was felt that this could be addressed by the inclusion of a brief description of the event in any publicity issued to Members.</li> <li>• Concerns were expressed that Members might feel pressured not to claim expenses for attending conferences and thus not be able to afford to attend.</li> <li>• Car mileage rates paid by the Council were above the levels set by HMRC and therefore had tax and National Insurance implications for both staff, Members and the Council, but the Committee was advised that this was currently under review.</li> <li>• The role of sponsorship in the Community Reception / Pride Awards was discussed</li> <li>• The importance of the public's perception of the Mayor was stressed.</li> <li>• It was considered whether the structure of the allowances and expenses scheme inadvertently debarred</li> </ul>	<p>M Nicholson Ext 2278</p> <p>S Crudgington Ext 2185</p>

interest from minority groups in becoming a Councillor.

- Stephen Hollingsworth advised the Committee that the allowance and expenses scheme should cover the costs of Members so that people could undertake the role without either being financially disadvantaged or feeling that they could not afford to do so. He also considered that there had been too much emphasis on cost cutting without looking at the value that the allowance and expenses scheme added either in encouraging people to stand for office or promoting the town (through the Mayor) in the eyes of the townspeople.

The Chair thanked the interviewees and Stephen Hollingsworth for their input into the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the input from Stephen Hollingsworth be noted and that the use of a critical friend be encouraged in subsequent reviews.
2. That the real and symbolic value of the Mayor, and the role that allowances and expenses allowed the role to be fulfilled, be recognised.
3. That the proposed realignment to staff and Member mileage rates under the Single Status agreement to those advised by HMRC be noted
4. That the reduction in the refreshment spend be noted.
5. That the following recommendations be incorporated in to the final report for the Portfolio Holder:
  - That consideration be given to renaming 'The Community Reception' 'The Mayor's Community Reception'
  - That any policy regarding Mayoral transport should be supportive of a situation whereby the Mayor attending a civic function should not self drive.
  - That the Committee is supportive of a Leader led review into of Town Twinning activities

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ That there should be more publicity to advise Members of the availability of conferences and training events</li> <li>○ That Members attending courses and conferences should be encouraged to share their experiences with all Members, perhaps through MMP sessions.</li> <li>○ That Members should be encouraged to give feedback should they consider a course or conference to be poor value</li> <li>○ That there should be a review of the induction process for new Members especially with regard to expenses, allowances and support services</li> <li>○ That new Members be teamed with a mentor</li> <li>○ That all Members should have a Personal Development and Training Plan</li> <li>○ That the Carers Attendance Allowance be reviewed, particularly in respect of the ability to pay family members for performing caring duties and the monthly payment cap.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. URGENT PART 1 DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None</p>	
<p><b>7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by SI2006 No.</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>

<p>88.</p> <p>2. That, having considered the reasons for the following report being in Part II, it be agreed that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.</p>	
<p><b>PART II</b></p>	
<p><b>8. PART II MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JULY 2013</b></p>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part II Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting held on 29 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>G Moody Ext 2203</p>
<p><b>9. URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>10. URGENT PART II BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	