

### 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015 Finance Committee meeting.

The councillors entered at 10am meaning the meeting started late at 10:04. This is probably because they had been deep in discussions in their private meeting before the public one.

The first item proper concerned the petition against G4S. The meeting heard two and half minutes each of arguments in favour of the petition from its two official presenters Norma Turner (Coordinator, Greater Manchester Stop G4S Campaign) and John Clegg (Secretary of Greater Manchester Unite Community Branch and Manchester Green Party Trade Union link). They called for Manchester City Council to adopt an ethical procurement policy to ensure that in the future the Council did not do business with companies that were in breach of ethical standards. The presenters also outlined the numerous issues the campaign has with G4S, such as alleged human rights abuses connected with their involvement with the Israeli Security Services, the ongoing investigation against them by the Serious Fraud Office because they took public money for the electronic tagging of dead people, and the recent Ofsted report into alleged mismanagement at Rainsbrook Youth Detention Centre, to name just three.

The meeting then heard Cllr Flanagan, acting as the Executive Officer, present the Council's official statement. This essentially amounted to a patronising statement that the Council must act within the law [MS: no one is suggesting that it doesn't], and can't do things which the petition didn't ask it to do (such as rip up all existing contracts with G4S). He argued that the alleged abuses by G4S in Israel could not be taken in to consideration as legally speaking these actions were committed by a different arm of G4S.

The Chair, Cllr Ollerhead, then asked again who was a member of Unite (even though he should have noted this at the start of the meeting under agenda item 'Interests'). After this break, Cllr Barrett called proposed that the petition be noted but not enacted upon. A vote was held with no further discussion and with all Councillors voting for the petition to be noted but no further action (in regards to the petition) to be taken. [MS: I think that the pre-meeting was where the Councillors voiced their opinions. This 'behind closed doors' approach is not a particular surprise.]

At this point Norma voiced her disappointment that the petition had not been discussed further and refuted a number of points presented by Cllr Flanagan. The Chair responded that this was not the end of the matter and that a Task and Finish Group would look into the adoption of an ethical procurement policy. John Clegg then also voiced his discontent noting that the wording of the petition had been drafted with the involvement of the Council Solicitor. Cllr Flanagan said that the legal advice was only to make sure that the petition could be presented before the Council and that their legal advice suggested that if an ethical procurement policy was endorsed at this meeting it could not legally be put into place. He and the chair also made many remarks about being supportive because of their 'Labour values'. [MS: Where were their 'Labour values' when G4S was first employed by the Council?] This item was concluded with Norma stating that she hoped to work with the council in future to ensure that an ethical procurement policy was adopted.

Item 6 and 7 concerned an update on Information Security and ICT. Both items didn't contain much of note, except that the Council has missed its own targets on the percentage of staff which are trained in data protection. It is also worth noting that Councillors were a lot

more vocal on these relatively mundane subjects that they were on the issue of G4S. A more thorough description of events and the reports are available here:  
<http://manchester.gov.uk/meetings>

Item 8 concerned the much-noted ethical procurement policy. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up on the matter and that it be 'wide-ranging' and invite many people to give evidence to it. The inclusion of external legal advice was welcomed by the Chair.

The final item concerned the Overview Report. The inclusion of many Greater Manchester related matters at the next meeting was noted.

The meeting ended at about 11:15. A number of things should be noted from this meeting:

- The Council makes a number of its decisions in private.
- There did seem to be some genuine concern about G4S from some Councillors, but it appears that they were asked to not make clear statements along these lines at the public meeting.
- The Executive and the way they conduct council business have significant power to ensure that Labour Councillors do not break rank with it even if they seem to disagree with it.
- The Council has extremely conservative legal advice and agrees with it on nearly every matter.

The above is an abridged impression of the meeting. For more detail please contact me at:  
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