



General Purposes Committee

Wednesday 25 February 2015 at 6.00 pm

Board Room 6 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Butt (Chair)
Moher (Vice-Chair)
Crane
Denselow
Hirani
Kansagra
McLennan
Pavey

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Kabir, Khan, Mahmood, Mashari, McLeish, J Mitchell
Murray, Nerva

Councillor Colwill

For further information contact: Bryony Gibbs, Democratic Services Officer
020 8937 1355, bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit:

democracy.brent.gov.uk

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Item **Page**

1 Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant financial or other interest in the items on this agenda.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

To follow

The minutes of the previous meeting were unavailable at the time of publishing and will be circulated separately.

3 Matters arising

4 Deputations (if any)

5 Establishment of a Pension Board

1 - 22

This report explains the requirement for the Council to establish a Pension Board, under new regulations which were made on 26 January 2015. There are some elements of discretion for the Council and a proposed way forward is set out for consideration by the Committee.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Conrad Hall, Chief Finance Officer

Tel: 020 8937 6528

conrad.hall@brent.gov.uk

6 Equality Strategy

23 - 48

The new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 sets out a refreshed vision and approach underpinned by the values of fairness, respect for people, valuing diversity and excellence in all our services. The strategy sets out Brent's determination to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights by achieving an 'excellent' assessment in the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2015.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Cara Davani, Director, HR

Tel: 020 8937 1909

cara.davani@brent.gov.uk

7 Equality Policy

49 - 60

The Equality Policy sets out Brent's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and how the council will promote equality and diversity in everything that we do in order to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Brent. This will replace the council's existing Equality Policy and is aligned to the new Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Cara Davani,
Director, HR

Tel: 020 8937 1909

cara.davani@brent.gov.uk

8 Workforce Strategy 2015 - 2019

61 - 94

This is the first council-wide Workforce Strategy and action plan in Brent. The strategy sets out the means by which Brent Council will engage, develop, enable and empower its workforce in order to achieve the vision and aspirations of the council and its partners. In order to meet the ongoing challenges faced by the council, the workforce will need to be adaptable, motivated to achieve Brent's vision, and able to deliver excellent public services to meet desired outcomes.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Cara Davani,
Director, HR

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cara.davani@brent.gov.uk

9 Local Government Pension Scheme Employer Pensions Discretions Policy

95 - 104

This report details the areas of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2014 relating to Employer Discretions where the council is required to formulate, publish and keep a policy statement under review.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Cara Davani,
Director, HR

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cara.davani@brent.gov.uk

10 Human Resources Pandemic Policy

105

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116

This report provides details of the proposed new Pandemic Policy. When developing the new policy, the opportunity has been taken to clarify its remit and give clearer guidance to staff on how HR policies may be affected during a pandemic.

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Contact Officer: Cara Davani,
Director, HR

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11 Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

12 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Democratic Services Manager or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.



Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.



General Purposes Committee
25 February 2015

Report from Chief Finance Officer

For Action

Establishment of a Pension Board

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report explains the requirement for the Council to establish a Pension Board, under new regulations which were made on 26th January 2015. There are some elements of discretion for the Council and a proposed way forward is set out for consideration by the Committee.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree the constitution of the Pension Board as set out in Appendix 2.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The implementation of Pension Boards is required as part of a wider change in governance of pension nationally. Given the existing arrangements within the LGPS there has been considerable debate as to whether the additional layer of governance provides value for money. However there is no choice but to comply.

3.2 In effect the Board can be considered to provide a scrutiny function of the work of the Pension Fund Sub-Committee. It does not have decision making powers but its purpose is to assist the Sub-Committee in carrying out its functions. Its remit therefore covers both pension administration and investment.

3.3 A more detailed explanation of the context is set out in Appendix 1.

3.4 The Board is required to:

- a) be established by 1 April 2015
- b) be operational by 30 July 2015
- c) have at least four members

- d) have an equal number of employer and scheme member representatives

3.5 There are a number of areas for local discretion and a proposed approach is set out in the draft terms of reference in Appendix 2. The main areas to consider are highlighted below.

Composition and Selection of the Board

3.6 It is proposed that the Board has seven members – three employer representatives, three scheme member representatives and an independent chair. This recognises the number of employers (and employee groups) represented within the scheme and, as with the Audit Committee, provides an external insight into the activities undertaken.

3.7 The proposed composition and selection process for the Board is as follows:

- a) Two employer representatives and two trade union representatives from Brent Council (Unison has presented its views on the Board and these are attached as a separate document)
- b) One employer representative from another employer within the Pension Fund (open to nomination by all employers with selection process if more than one nominated)
- c) A pension scheme member (request nominations, with a selection process if more than one nominated)
- d) The independent chair be openly advertised (as is the case with the Audit Committee)

Allowances and Expenses

3.8 It is proposed that the chair of the Committee receive an allowance equivalent to the Audit Committee at £415 pa and that the other members are reimbursed expenses.

Frequency of Meetings

3.9 It is recommended that the Board meet twice per year as a minimum. Additional meetings can be called by the Chair if required or in response to a request from the Pension Fund Sub-Committee.

Reporting

3.10 It is proposed that the minutes of the Board meetings are reported to the Pension Fund Sub-Committee along with any specific matters the Board wishes to bring to the Sub-Committee's attention.

3.11 An annual report on the work of the Board should also be sent to the General Purposes Committee.

Next Steps

3.12 The detail of the Local Pension Board will be included in Part 2 Article 11 of the Constitution ('Other Bodies and Panels) in the next report to Full Council on Constitutional changes.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of the Pension Board is met from the Pension Fund. It is important that this cost is kept at a proportionate level and it is proposed that a budget of £10k is established for the operation and servicing of the Board.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 are amended by Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015. The regulations require that the Council establish a Pension Board by no later than 1st April 2015.
- 5.2 The functions of the Board are prescribed by the regulations namely to
- (a) to secure compliance with—
 - (i) these Regulations,
 - (ii) any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme and any connected scheme, and
 - (iii) any requirements imposed by the Pension Regulator in relation to the Scheme; and
 - (b) to ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme
- 5.3 The expenses of the Pension Board (including allowances, training, professional advice and administrative support) are to be regarded as part of the costs of administration of the fund held by the Council.
- 5.4 In some areas the arrangements are a matter of local choice for the Council:
- i. The Pension Board may be part of the Pension Fund Sub Committee *if* the Secretary of State consents. It is recommended that a Board separate from that committee be established.
 - ii. The Council can choose the procedures applicable to the Pension Board, including the establishment of sub-committees, and formation of joint committees. It is recommended that a Brent Board be established by the General Purposes Committee and that the arrangements for the Board broadly follow the same arrangements as used for Council committees
 - iii. Payment of expenses. It is recommended that the Chair be independent and that he/she receive a nominal sum (£415p/a - the same as the Independent Chair of Audit) and that others receive out of pockets expenses for attendance at meetings.
 - iv. With regards membership of the Board, the membership, terms of appointment and manner in which people may be appointed and removed are for the Council to decide. However, there must be no less than 4 members on the Board and there must be an equal number of employer representatives and member representatives. The Council must also be satisfied that the representatives have the capacity to represent the employer/ employees as the case may be. Furthermore, no officer or elected member of the Council who is responsible for the discharge of any function under these regulations may be a member of a local pension board, such that members of the Pension Sub

Committee or officers responsible for pensions cannot be on the Board. Lastly, the Board members must not have a conflict of interest and information to that end has to be provided.

- 5.5 In setting up the Board and the operation thereof the Council must also have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Shadow Scheme Advisory Board has developed guidance on the creation and operation of Pension Boards, and once the Scheme Advisory Board is formally appointed the guidance is likely to be adopted by it and it will then be statutory guidance. That draft guidance has been taken into account in the preparation of these documents.
- 5.6 The General Purposes Committee has delegated to it the following functions and powers under its Terms of Reference *To determine matters referred to it by the Chief Finance Officer or the Pension Fund Sub-Committee concerning the Council's functions under the Local Government Pension Scheme* (Para 7). In this instance the referral is by the Chief Finance Officer. Alternatively paragraph 10 provides that the Committee *carry out any non-executive functions which are not the responsibility of any other person or Council committee or sub-committee, except where prevented by law from doing so or by any other provision in this Constitution*, thus providing general delegated authority to the General Purposes Committee to undertake any non executive functions. The appointment of the Pension Board is a non executive function.

6.0 Diversity Implications

There are no equality implications directly arising from this report

Contact Officers

Conrad Hall
Chief Finance Officer

Appendix 1 – Background and Context

1. The Government commissioned Lord Hutton to chair the Independent Public Service Pension Commission to review public service pension and to make recommendations on how such schemes can be made more sustainable and affordable in the long term, and fair to both public sector workers and the taxpayer. Lord Hutton's final report was published on 10 March 2011. In that report he made clear that change is needed to "make public service pension schemes simpler and more transparent, fairer to those on low moderate earnings".
2. The recommendations made by Lord Hutton were accepted by the Government and were carried forward into the Public Service Pension Act 2013. The Act included a requirement for DCLG as the responsible authority of the Scheme to make regulations establishing a national scheme advisory board and enabling each LGPS scheme manager (in effect the administering authority) to establish a Local Pension Board.
3. In June 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued draft governance regulations for consultation with interested parties. Subsequent draft guidance was issued in Autumn 2014 by the LGPS Shadow Scheme Advisory Board and the final regulations and guidance were issued at the end of January 2015..

LGPS Governance Structure Prior to April 2015

4. Prior to 1 April 2015, the LGPS has had a relatively straightforward governance structure which includes the Secretary of State and the administering authority. Each administering authority is responsible for managing and administering the LGPS in relation to any person for which it is the appropriate administering authority under the Regulations. The administering authority is responsible for maintaining and investing its own Fund within the LGPS.
5. Brent Council acts as administering authority for the Brent Pension Fund, which includes a number of larger bodies (such as the College of North West London and BHP) and smaller entities (those providing contracted out services and some local charities).

Establishing a Pension Board

6. It is important to note that the establishment of the Board does not alter the role of the Council's Pension Fund Sub-Committee in taking decisions on pension matters. Instead the regulations specifies that each administering authority shall establish its own Local Pension Board with responsibility for assisting the administering authority:
 - to secure compliance with:
 - the regulations
 - other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the LGPS
 - the requirements imposed by the Regulator in relation to the LGPS

- to ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the LGPS.
7. The remit of the Local Pension Board covers all aspects of governance and administration of the LGPS, including funding and investments.
 8. Local Pension Boards must be established no later than 1 April 2015. Established in this context means that the administering authority must have approved the establishment of the Local Pension Board and its composition and also the terms of reference, in accordance with its constitution. It does not necessarily mean that the Local Pension Board has to be fully operational by this date. However, it is anticipated that a Local Pension Board should be operational within a reasonably practicable period after 1 April 2015 (within 4 months).
 9. A Local Pension Board must include an equal number of employer and pension scheme member representatives with a minimum requirement of no less than four in total. The Guidance provides that the factors to be considered in deciding the size of the Board include the size of any existing bodies, the number of scheme members, cost, and the existence of any other advisory groups. No officer or councillor of an administering authority who is responsible for the discharge of any function under the regulations may be a member of a Local Pension Board. The regulations also require that the administering authority must ensure that any person it wishes to appoint as an employer or member representative has the capacity to represent the employers or members (as appropriate) of the Fund. An individual's ability to properly represent the interests of employers or members (as appropriate) and channel information back to those persons effectively should also be a key factor in selecting members of the Local Pension Board. This needs to take account of the wide range of membership of the Fund to ensure all employers and members are represented. The Regulations also allow for the appointment of other members i.e. members who are not there to represent employers or scheme members, for example where an Administering Authority wishes to appoint an independent chairperson to the Local Pension Board.
 10. There is no appointment process stipulated in the regulations and it is left and the discretion of the Local Authority.
 11. The importance of training, including high quality pre appointment training is also highlighted in the guidance. Addressing conflict of interest issues also feature prominently in the guidance.
 12. The mechanisms and frequency for reports from the Board also need to be considered. An annual report of its work to General Purposes Committee is recommended. In relation to general in year feedback this may be best achieved by the Board minutes being made available to the Pension Fund Sub Committee and CFO. The guidance also suggests that there be included in the terms of reference arrangements for serious concerns to be reported or escalated. There are also legal responsibilities placed upon the individual members of the Board to refer breaches of the law to the Pension Regulator. Accordingly it is proposed that a separate document for reporting arrangements be prepared.

13. Other matters to be considered include:
 - the terms of office (to balance refreshing membership with the need to build up experience)
 - arrangements for termination
 - whether to pay an allowance

14. The Guidance requires updating of the governance compliance statement, preparation of a conflict of interest policy, training provisions, and the arrangements for reporting concerns and breaches.

Appendix 2

Constitution of the Pension Board of the London Borough of Brent Pension Scheme

Terms of Reference

1. To assist the London Borough of Brent as scheme manager in securing compliance with:
 - a. the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013;
 - b. any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Local Government Pension Fund Scheme (LGPS);
 - c. requirements imposed by the Pension Regulator in respect of the LGPS;
 - d. such other matters as the LGPS regulations may specify
2. To assist the London Borough of Brent in securing the effective and efficient governance and administration of the scheme;
3. To consider cases that have been referred to the Pension Regulator and/or the Pension Ombudsman; recommending changes to processes, training and/or guidance where necessary;
4. To produce an annual report outlining the work of the Board throughout the financial year to the General Purposes Committee

Composition

The membership of the Board shall consist of:

- 3 Brent Council Pension Fund employer representatives
- 3 Brent Council Pension Fund member representatives
- 1 independent member (chair)

No substitutes are permitted.

All members of the Board shall be appointed by the General Purposes Committee.

Any person who is applying for or appointed as a member of the Pension Board must provide the Scheme Manager with such information as and when the Scheme Manager requires to ensure that any member of the Board or person to be appointed to the Board does not have a conflict of interest.

No officer or elected member of the Council who is responsible for the discharge of any function in relation to the LGPS shall be a member of the Board.

Tenure

Board members shall be appointed for three to four years. The period of appointment shall be determined on appointment by the Council's General Purposes Committee to ensure continuation of membership in equal numbers for the employer and member representatives and to achieve rolling reappointment to maintain knowledge and experience on the Board.

Board members may be re-appointed to the Board.

At least 3 months' notice of resignation from the Board must be given by a Board member, to enable a replacement member to be found and the required balance of members maintained.

Quorum

The quorum of the Board shall be 3 including at least one employer representative and one member representative.

Voting

It is expected that the Board will function as far as possible by consensus, however each employer and employee Board member shall have one vote.

Frequency of meetings and notice and record requirements

Meetings shall be held bi-annually and normally in public unless confidential or exempt information is to be discussed..

Additional meetings may be called at the request of the Chair of the Board or of the Brent Council Pension Fund Sub-committee.

Normally meetings shall be called on 5 clear days' notice to members of the Board published on the Brent council website but if in the reasonable opinion of the Chair the holding of a meeting is urgent shorter notice of such length as the Chair shall determine may be given.

A formal record of the proceedings of the Board shall be maintained by the council's Democratic Services and circulated to members of the Board after approval by the Chair.

Procedure at meetings of the Board

The Council's committee procedure rules in Part 4 of its Constitution shall apply except that where there is a conflict between the committee rules and these terms of reference the latter shall apply.

The Board shall normally meet on the same date as the Pension Fund sub-committee in order that its deliberations may be taken into account in relation to relevant items on the agenda of the Pension Fund sub-committee.

Remuneration of Members

Remuneration for Board members will be limited to a refund of actual expenses incurred in attending Board meetings. The Independent Member shall be entitled to an allowance.

Standards of Conduct

The role of Pension Board members requires the highest standards of conduct and therefore the "seven principles of public life" will be applied to all Pension Board members and embodied in their code of conduct.

These are –

- **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.
- **Honesty** - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

As members of a publicly-funded body involved in the discharge of public business, all members of a Board should comply with these principles in the exercise of their functions. They require the highest standards of conduct.

Members of the Board will also be expected to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct which will be issued to them upon appointment

Conflicts of Interest

The Chief Finance Officer shall be responsible for maintaining a conflicts of interest policy for the Board.

The Public Service Pension Act 2013 and the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 require that members of the Board do not have conflicts of interests. All members of the Board will be required to declare any interests and any potential conflicts of interest in accordance with these requirements on appointment and at regular intervals thereafter so they can be included in the Board's register of interests.

An appointed member of the Board is under a duty to provide the Scheme Manager with such information as the Scheme Manager reasonably requires to satisfy itself that such person has no conflicts of interest.

Conflicts of interest will be included as an open agenda item at Board meetings and revisited during the meeting where necessary and in accordance with the policy may impact on a member's ability to participate in that item.

Members of the Board should review conflicts of interest at least annually and maintain their entry in the Board's register of interests.

Knowledge of Members and Training

All employer and member representatives on the Board are required to have relevant experience and capacity to represent scheme employers or scheme members (as appropriate).

All members of the Pension Board must be conversant with –

- The legislation and associated guidance of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).
- Any document recording policy about the administration of the LGPS which is for the time being adopted by the Brent Pension Fund.

A member of the Pension Board must have knowledge and understanding of –

- The law relating to pension, and
- Any other matters which are prescribed in regulations.

It is for individual Board members to be satisfied that they have the appropriate degree of knowledge and understanding to enable them to properly exercise their functions as a member of the Board.

Board members are required to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and to refresh and keep their knowledge up to date. Pension Board members are therefore required to maintain a written record of relevant training and development.

Board members will undertake a personal training needs analysis and regularly review their skills, competencies and knowledge to identify gaps or weaknesses. Board members should draw to the attention of the Chief Finance Officer any areas in which they consider they need training or information.

Board members will comply with the Scheme Manager's training policy and are required to promptly complete any training designated by the Board as mandatory.

The Board should prepare and keep updated a list of the core documents recording policy about the administration of the Fund and make sure that the list and documents (as well as the rules of the LGPS) are accessible to its members (see publication of Pension Board information below).

Termination of Board Membership

Appointments will terminate at the expiry of a member's term of office.

Membership of the Board shall automatically terminate in the event that:

- a member who is a councillor is appointed to the Pension Fund Sub-Committee as a member or a substitute member;
- a member is appointed to the role of an officer of the Scheme Manager with responsibility for the discharge of functions under the Regulations;
- a representative member ceases to represent his constituency, for example if an employer representative leaves the employment of his employer and therefore ceases to have the capacity to represent the Fund's employers;

Any appointment to the Pension Board may be terminated by the General Purposes Committee if any of the following situations arise:

- a member has a conflict of interest which cannot be managed in accordance with the Board's conflicts policy;
- a member fails to attend meetings or otherwise comply with the requirements of being a Board member, for example fails to attend the necessary knowledge and understanding training;
- a member is not adequately meeting their duties in some other respect after this having been drawn to their attention and an adequate time being given for improvement;
- continued membership of a member is likely to cause damage to the reputation of the Board and/or of the council.

Where issues of this nature arise, the chair of the Board will have lead responsibility for an initial informal discussion with the member about the concerns. The Chair of the Board will be advised by the Chief Finance Officer. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the Board may recommend to the General Purposes Committee that the Board Member be removed from the Board.

Undertaking

Board members will be required to sign a written undertaking that they understand the requirements of the role and commit to those requirements. This will include without limitation:

- disclosing all dual interests and responsibilities which have the potential to become conflicts of interest and providing the Scheme Manager with such information as and when the Scheme Manager requires to ensure that any member of the Pension Board or person to be appointed to the Pension Board does not have a conflict of interest
- committing to attend meetings as required;
- committing to undertake and attend the necessary knowledge and understanding training;
- undertaking to abide by the Board's terms of reference and wider constitutional documents.
- Complying with the Council's code of conduct
- Complying with the Council's obligations and policies on data protection, information security and acceptable use.
- Agreeing that they have read and understood a knowledge and policy document including a list of the core documents recording policy about the administration of the fund as set out by the Chief Finance Officer on behalf of the Scheme Manager

Advisers to the Board

The Board will primarily be supported in its role and responsibilities by officers of the Council. Subject to any applicable regulation and legislation from time to time in force and to their use and any fees being agreed by the Chief Finance Officer on behalf of the Scheme Manager in advance, the Board may consult with other advisors to help it better perform its duties including:

- The Fund's Actuary;
- The Fund's Administrator;
- The Fund's Investment Adviser(s);
- The Scheme Manager
- Other advisers, as approved by the Scheme Manager.

Reporting Serious Concerns or Breaches

Any breach brought to the attention of the Board, whether potential or actual, shall be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in a separate policy document.

Publication of Pension Board information

Up to date information will be posted on the Brent website showing

- The names and information of the Pension Board members
- How the scheme members are represented on the Pension Board
- The responsibilities of the Pension Board as a whole
- The full terms of reference and policies of the Pension Board and how they operate
- The Pension Board appointment process
- Who each individual Pension Board member represents
- Any specific roles and responsibilities of individual Pension Board members.

Pension Board papers, agendas and minutes of meetings will be published on the Council's website. These may at the discretion of the Scheme Manager be edited to exclude items on the grounds that they would either involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act and/or they represent data covered by the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Scheme Manager will also consider requests for additional information to be published or made available to individual scheme members to encourage scheme member engagement and promote a culture of openness and transparency.

Definitions

The undernoted terms shall have the following meaning when used in this document:

"Pension Board" or "Board"

Means the Pension Board for the administering authority for the LB Brent Pension Fund as required under the Public Service Pension Act 2013

"Scheme Manager"

Means LB Brent as administering authority of the Brent Pension Fund.

"LGPS"

The Local Government Pension Scheme as constituted by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014

and the
The Local Government Pension
Scheme (Management and
Investment of Funds) Regulations
2009

“Scheme”

Means the Local Government
Pension Scheme as defined under
“LGPS”

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Pension Boards: Model Constitution

1. Introduction

1.1 Each Local Government Pension Scheme Manager in England and Wales is required to establish a Pensions Board separate from the Pensions Committee that acts as the Scheme Manager.

1.2 The (*name of fund*) Pension Board is established under the provisions of the Regulations 2015.

2. Objectives

2.1 The Pension Board is the body responsible for assisting the Scheme Manager in relation to compliance with scheme regulations and the requirements of the Pensions Regulator and any other relevant legislation.

2.2 The Pension Board will determine the areas they wish to consider including, amongst others:

- Reports produced for the pensions committee
- Seek reports from the scheme managers on any aspect of the fund
- Monitor investments and the investment principles/strategy/guidance
- Monitor fund investment and custodian transaction costs
- The fund annual report
- External voting and engagement provisions
- Fund administrative performance
- Actuarial reports and valuations
- Funding policy
- Any other matters that the pensions board deem appropriate

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the Pension Board will consist of equal numbers of trade union representatives and employer representatives, drawn from councils and scheduled or admitted bodies in membership of the fund. Pension Board representatives must not also participate in or act as members of the pensions committee. Local Authority employer representatives will normally be Elected Members serving as part of the Council.

(As a minimum there will be 4 trade union and 4 employer representatives with the expectation that larger funds will require greater numbers. Numbers from organisations on either side will broadly reflect respective membership in the scheme.)

3.2 There will be (*number*) trade union representatives appointed by the trade unions as follows:

UNISON
GMB
Unite

3.3 There will be (*number*) employer representatives appointed by the respective employer organisations as follows:

Councils
Scheduled bodies
Admitted bodies

(In smaller funds it may be possible to name the councils and other bodies. In larger funds describe the way representatives of these groups are appointed e.g. at the pension fund annual meeting)

3.4 Pension Board representatives will serve for a period of four years and may be reappointed to serve further terms. Timescales for organisations to notify the Pension Board of their representatives shall be locally determined. Employer bodies and organisations retain the right to withdraw representatives and identify replacements on occasion.

3.5 Appointing bodies can appoint a named substitute for their representative. Such substitutes must undertake the same training as set out in (6) below.

3.6 Advisors may attend meetings of the Pension Board in a non-voting capacity.

3.7 No person may be appointed to the Pension Board that has a significant conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as a financial or other interest which is likely to prejudice a person's exercise of functions as a member of the Pension Board. It does not include a financial or other interest arising merely by virtue of that person being a member of the scheme or any connected scheme for which the board is established. The Pension Board will adopt policies and protocols for handling any conflicts that were unanticipated and might arise during membership.

4. Meetings

4.1 The Chair of the Pension Board will be rotated on an annual basis between the trade union and employer sides of the Pension Board.

4.2 Pensions Board meetings will be administered by (*pension fund or administering authority depending on local practice*) as agreed with Joint Secretaries appointed by the trade union and employers sides of the Pension Board. All reasonable administration costs shall be met by the fund.

4.3 The Pensions Board should meet at least quarterly. A majority of either side may requisition a special meeting of the Pension Board in exceptional circumstances.

4.4 The Pensions Board may establish sub-committees.

4.5 While the statutory roles and function of the pension committee and pensions board are separate, the normal practice will be that both bodies will meet at the same time to consider the same agenda, with the Chair of the pension committee chairing the concurrent meeting. The aim is to engender a positive and proactive partnership culture where in practice the two bodies act as one.

5. Dispute resolution

5.1 If the Pension Committee and Pension Board cannot reach joint agreement on any matter the process for resolving any differences between the two bodies will be as follows. Whilst this process is undertaken the decision of the Pension Committee is still competent.

5.2 In the first instance, if at least half of the members agree, then the pension board can refer back a decision of the pensions committee for further consideration if any of the following grounds are met:

- That there is evidence or information which it is considered needs re-evaluating or new evidence or data which the Pensions Committee did not access or was not aware of at the point of decision making and which is considered material to the decision taken;

- That the decision of the Pensions Committee could be considered illegal or contrary to regulations;
- That the decision of the Pensions Committee is contrary to a relevant Code of Practice published by the Pensions Regulator; or
- That the decision is not in the interest of the continued financial viability of the Scheme or is against the principles of proper and responsible administration of the Scheme

5.3 If there is no agreement after the matter has been referred back to the pensions Committee, then the difference in view between the Pension Board and the Pension Committee will be published in the form of a joint secretarial report on the fund website and included in the fund annual report.

5.4 The England/Wales LGPS Scheme Advisory Board may also consider and take a view on the matter and, if considered appropriate, provide advice to the Scheme Manager or the pension board in relation to the matter.

6. Training

6.1 All members (and named substitutes) of the Pensions Board must undertake a training programme in accordance with any guidance issued by the pensions regulator and complying with best practice training requirements of the Pensions Committee.

6.2 The Pensions Board shall agree policies and arrangements for the acquisition and retention of knowledge and understanding for pension board members

6.3 The Scheme Manager will keep an updated list of the documents with which they consider pension board members need to be conversant to effectively carry out their role and make sure that both the list and the documents are accessible.

7. Access to Information

7.1 The Scheme Manager and Pensions Board will together ensure that information is published about the activities of the board including:

- the full terms of reference for the pension board, including details of how they will operate
- the pension board appointment process
- who each individual pension board member represents and
- any specific roles and responsibilities of individual pension board members.


7.2 The minutes of the Pension Board will be published on the fund website. The Pensions Board may undertake such communications and stakeholder engagement as it deems appropriate to perform its functions.

UNISON key demands for boards

- Model terms of reference are attached for consultation
- A board structure should reflect the size of the fund – 4 members 2 employer 2 scheme member is the statutory minimum at present. The more assets under management the greater the workload.
- Independent board members should be kept to a minimum as they do not represent anyone
- The chair should be rotated between employer and scheme member reps
- The board must meet the same amount of time as the pension committee as its legal duty is to advise and assist the authority. It can't do that if it meets less than the pensions committee.
- Board reps should receive facility time for attending meetings, training and preparation, no less than 1 hour per week. 52 hours plus training and meeting time.
- We believe UNISON has the internal expertise and resources to ensure that scheme members are represented effectively at fund and scheme advisory board level.
- UNISON has provide a dedicated central resource for LGPS governance, including advice, training, legal and web resources.
- UNISON board representatives will be able to take advantage of our extensive branch, regional and national networks.
- One of the former partner unions of UNISON, NALGO, was created in 1922 to negotiate the first stage of what now is the modern LGPS and we expect to continue to ensure that it works for all scheme members.
- We consider the role of UNISON LGPS board and pension committee reps is to represent the fiduciary interests of all classes of scheme member. UNISON is the largest representative body for employees and scheme members in the UK.
- UNISON has been at the heart of the reform of governance within the LGPS. We have two members on the current Shadow Board for England and Wales and we expect that to continue into 2015.
- Board members should be appointed from nominations by UNISON
- If not then there should be an election by scheme members

We should argue for the following

- 2 each for a fund below £500m in asset value
- 3 each in any above £500m- £3bn in asset value
- 4 each in any fund between £3bn-£10bn in asset value
- 5 each in any fund above £10bn
- Request election of scheme reps – via their web sites – whe appointments

 Brent	<p>General Purposes Committee 25 February 2015</p> <p>Report from the Director of Human Resources</p>
<p>For Action Wards affected: ALL</p>	
<p>Equality Strategy</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 sets out a refreshed vision and approach underpinned by the values of fairness, respect for people, valuing diversity and excellence in all our services. The strategy sets out Brent's determination to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights by achieving an 'excellent' assessment in the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2015.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The General Purposes Committee is asked to approve the new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 and action plan.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Equality Strategy sets out how effective equality and diversity practice will be fully integrated into everything the council does – as a locality leader, as a provider and commissioner of services and as an employer.
- 3.2 The Equality Strategy is central to the achievement of our vision for the borough of Brent, agreed with partners, which is to make Brent a place that creates the right opportunities for all who live and work here to change their lives for the better. Understanding how the work of local services affects different people, advancing equality of opportunity for all, tackling discrimination where it exists and fostering good relations between the different communities in the borough contributes to better services and improved outcomes for everyone. Good equality practice is always essential to operate effectively in a diverse setting. In our current context, in one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK, it is more relevant than ever as we respond to a challenging financial climate which is impacting heavily on our residents and on the services that are provided and commissioned by the council.

- 3.3 The council set the following strategic equality objectives in 2012:
- a. To develop a strong evidence base of information to help identify and address inequality and needs.
 - b. To gather and analyse performance data across the nine protected characteristics that will allow us to understand and address the causes of differential outcomes and influence service delivery.
 - c. To work in partnership with voluntary and community led organisations to ensure that services are delivered to the wider community.
 - d. To encourage residents to participate and engage with us in order to help us to shape local priorities and improve our performance in service delivery across the protected groups.
 - e. To ensure that sound equality practices underpin our procurement and commissioning processes.
- 3.4 The Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 replaces and builds upon these equality objectives to respond to our current context. It sets new equality and human rights objectives in order to achieve key equalities outcomes for those who live and work in Brent. The Strategy will also ensure that we fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and support our determination to be recognised as a model of excellent practice in equality and human rights.
- 3.5 The priorities and objectives set out in the Strategy have been developed following extensive consultation with councillors, employees, the Corporate Management Team, the Diversity Reference Group, Departmental Management Teams, trade unions and with stakeholders across the borough, including residents, through Brent Connects Service User Forums, partner organisations, including those in the community and voluntary sector, councillors, Trades Unions and staff. The Equality Team also benchmarked against good practice in the sector, using the Equality Framework for Local Government. Recommendations from the recent review of HR and Equalities Policies have also been taken into consideration although a separate action plan will be developed to roll out the key findings of this review. The themes identified through consultation and benchmarking were:
- a. improving knowledge and understanding of all our communities;
 - b. involving our communities effectively in civic and community life;
 - c. demonstrating leadership in equalities and human rights and organisational commitment to excellence;
 - d. ensuring that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect;
 - e. developing and sustaining a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people.
- 3.6 The Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 proposes five equality and human rights objectives linked to these themes and to Brent's strategic priorities. Working towards these priorities will enable the council to embed excellent diversity and equality practice across all our activities. The Action Plan sets out milestones to assess if the council is delivering against these objectives. The Action Plan is an annual plan which will be replaced each year of the life of the strategy.
- 3.7 Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, will be responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the Equality Strategy are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services. The Equality Team, overseen by the HR Director, will be responsible for the operational management of the strategy and its monitoring and review. The Equality Team will provide 6-monthly monitoring and evaluation reports and an annual report evaluating progress and outcomes achieved to CMT for review.

4.0 Implementation Date

4.1 Although some of the activities identified in the action plan are already underway, it is recommended that the strategy and action plan become live on 1 April 2015 and be published on the council's website to enable wide access, transparency and scrutiny.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 Any costs associated with the delivery of the Equality Strategy and action plan will be accommodated from existing budgets.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 The new Equality Strategy will help the council to demonstrate that it is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and follows good practice.

7.0 Diversity Implications

7.1 The Equality Strategy sets out how the council will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

8.1 The Equality Strategy and Action Plan set out principles and actions to develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people.

8.2 The Equality Team will develop equality partnerships with local organisations delivering services to Brent residents, such as Brent Housing Partnership, and will expand to deliver funded equality work programmes for these organisations.

Background Papers

Contact Officers

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HR Director

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**Equality Strategy
2015 – 2019**

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Introduction: our vision and purpose

The Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 sets out how effective diversity and equality practice will be fully integrated into everything the council does – as a locality leader, as a provider and commissioner of services, and as an employer. The strategy is central to the achievement of our vision for the borough of Brent, agreed with partners, which is to make Brent a place that creates – through excellence in all local services – the right opportunities for *all* who live and work here, and to change their lives for the better. Understanding how the work of local services affects different people, advancing equality of opportunity for all, tackling discrimination where it exists and fostering good relations between the different communities in the borough contributes to better services and improved outcomes for everyone.

The Equality Strategy fully reflects the explicitly stated core values of the council:

- fairness – we are driven by a determination to reduce inequality and injustice
- respect for people – we actively engage with our residents and staff, seek their views, and use them to shape our decision-making
- valuing diversity – we plan and respond to the needs of our different communities, challenge discrimination, value contributions from all and are champions of equalities and human rights
- excellence in all our services – we strive to achieve the very best standards of service for all our residents.

Our context

Brent's population has increased by 18% over the past ten years to 312,000. This is now the fifth largest of the London boroughs, and we are the fourteenth most densely populated area in the country. The number of under five year olds has increased by 37 per cent and those aged 5-19 years by eight per cent, giving Brent a young population, often living in extended families.

Brent is also one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK. People from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds now make up 64 per cent of the total population. And we continue to welcome new communities today, such as the growing Eastern European, Filipino and Somali populations. We are proud of our historic ability to welcome different cultures, support their integration and create a context in which people from different backgrounds and cultures feel they get on well together. The cultural diversity of the borough and the cohesion between its different communities are major factors in Brent's characteristic vibrancy and dynamism.

Achieving and maintaining cohesion in this context has to be worked at, however. Good relations need to be fostered, nurtured and supported. Different communities need to work to understand each other's perspectives, and service providers must work to engage with our different communities – longer-established groups as well as new arrivals and those who are vulnerable and at risk of being marginalised – and to understand their needs. The council has a pivotal and leading role to play in ensuring that this happens.

The council's workforce currently reflects the wider community of Brent. We actively promote the value of such a richly diverse workforce with our partners and providers because it strengthens understanding of the perspectives of the different communities receiving local services. It helps us to develop and deliver effective community engagement, to build stronger communities, and to provide the best quality services, tailored to user needs. We

aim to attract the most talented people from all backgrounds to our jobs and we value the wide range of skills, experiences and perspectives that they bring to us in Brent.

There is much to be valued in Brent as a place to live, work and do business. It is home to the iconic Wembley Stadium, the Wembley Arena and the spectacular Swaminarayan Hindu Temple, and our borough is the destination for thousands of British and international visitors every year. We are served by some of the best road and rail transport links in London. Our population is young, dynamic, entrepreneurial and growing. We have award winning parks and fine open spaces, good schools, and a vibrant cultural offer.

But ... there are also many challenges to be overcome if we are to ensure that the lives of all those living and working here continue to improve.

The median household income in Brent is the third lowest in London. One in every three children in the borough is living in poverty, and this increases to 50 per cent in our most deprived wards. Poverty, unemployment and adult skills levels are key challenges for the borough, underpinning the pressing need to promote growth in job opportunities, support residents to access them and to tackle inequalities.

Brent has the fifth highest private rent levels in London, making even two bedroom properties unaffordable for many on average earnings. There is a greater reliance in Brent than many other places on benefits and social housing. For families affected by the benefit cap, larger homes are not affordable and even two bedroom accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult to find. As a result, the government's changes to the welfare system will have a more widespread and more severe impact in Brent than in most other parts of the country. We need to tackle this by getting more people into work.

Living in poverty generally contributes to poorer health, well-being and social isolation. The statistics show that people on low incomes are more likely to have a life-limiting health condition, take less exercise and have a shorter life. This applies to many Brent residents.

The values of equality and fairness must be central to the way we meet these challenges and pursue our priorities. We need both to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and to help them improve their quality of life. This means creating more and better opportunities and improving access to those opportunities, reducing poverty and the inequality in wages levels, promoting the London Living Wage, and supporting independence and choice for all. We need to develop practical responses to issues such as fuel debt, expensive childcare, loan sharks and poor health outcomes related to poverty.

This strategy was created within this context and against the backdrop of a challenging financial climate which is impacting heavily on residents and on the services that are provided and commissioned by councils. In difficult times like this, our commitment to equality is more relevant than ever. We are ever mindful that the most vulnerable groups are especially hard hit and that there is a risk that financial hardship that is perceived as unfair can lead to community tensions.

Understanding difference, bringing people together and challenging unfairness must be central to the way we respond to this context. This is the responsibility not only of the council, but also of those we work with and alongside. The council recognises the key and enhanced role that our voluntary and community sector partners in particular will have to play. Their knowledge of our residents and communities, and the ability of many of them to provide quality services at a good price, will be increasingly important in ensuring that these aims are met. This commitment to promoting equality and human rights is fully embedded in the Brent Borough Plan 2015 – 2019 which provides a shared vision for the borough and the priorities for making sure that vision is achieved.

Our duties

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to consolidate and strengthen all previous anti-discrimination legislation. It covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race - this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief - this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

The Act introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. The Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work - in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. By understanding how their activities can impact on different people, public bodies are better placed to deliver efficient, effective and inclusive services.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Public Sector Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, which require public bodies, including local authorities, to:

- publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually
- set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives and review these at least every four years.

The present strategy, and the annual action plan for its delivery, will ensure that we fulfil these duties and support our determination to be recognised as a model of excellent practice in equality and human rights.

Our commitments to equality and human rights

A commitment to equality and an understanding of diversity are crucial to making our vision a reality; the council is determined to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights. We see this commitment and understanding as critical to achieving the best possible outcomes for *all* those who live and work here.

To ensure that all who live and work here have genuinely equal opportunities to improve their quality of life, we will be mindful in all that we do of how our policies and practices can affect people in different ways – because of their age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, nationality, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual

orientation and socio-economic background. We will be mindful of the impact of discrimination and inequalities on all our local communities.

The principles of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy which underpin the Human Rights Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are explicitly reflected in the council's core values.

A human rights based approach is about putting people first in decision-making and empowering them to understand and stand up for their rights, and about ensuring that individuals and institutions who are responsible for planning and providing services understand those rights and are accountable for ensuring that they are respected, protected and fulfilled.

The council is committed to adopting a human rights based approach. This means that the council will ensure that both the standards and the principles of human rights are integrated into policymaking and the day to day running of the services it commissions and provides.

Consultation

The priorities and objectives set out in this strategy have been set following extensive consultation with councillors, employees, the Diversity Reference Group, Departmental Management Teams, trade unions and with stakeholders across the borough, including residents, through Brent Connects Service User Forums, partner organisations, including those in the community and voluntary sector, councillors, Trades Unions and staff.

Objectives and outcomes

We have set five equality and human rights objectives in order to achieve key equalities outcomes for those who live and work in Brent:

Objectives	Outcomes
<p>1. To know and understand all our communities</p> <p><i>We will gather and analyse equality data and work with a wide range of partners to develop a robust understanding of the changing identities and needs of our local communities.</i></p> <p><i>This knowledge will inform our planning and decision making so that we can ensure best quality services and deliver better outcomes for all our residents.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent, up-to-date published information on community profiles and needs that is easily accessible to all local people and partner organisations
<p>2. To involve our communities effectively</p> <p><i>We will use new and creative forms of community engagement so that all of our residents – including under-represented groups – feel that they can participate in public life and that the council listens to them.</i></p> <p><i>We will reflect on lessons learned from our history and the experiences of our partners to improve our practices and our ability to identify potential impacts on equality when making changes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in civic and community life amongst all communities, especially those who commonly experience barriers to participation • An increase in the number of volunteers
<p>3. To demonstrate leadership in equalities and human rights, both within the council and amongst partners, and organisational commitment to excellence</p> <p><i>Our commitment to diversity and equality will be at the heart of the council's vision, objectives, priorities and plans. We will encourage political leaders and senior officers to demonstrate leadership by championing equality, promoting respect, challenging prejudice and addressing negative stereotyping of any groups.</i></p> <p><i>We will work with a wide range of partners to foster good relations and build resilient, cohesive communities that take pride in and feel a sense of responsibility towards their neighbourhoods.</i></p> <p><i>We will share good practice with and benchmark our practice against local authorities and other relevant organisations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vision, agreed with partners, residents and our different communities for a better future for the borough and the values, priorities and actions that will enable that vision to be achieved • An increase in the number of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Brent • External validation as an exemplar of good practice in equality and human rights

<p>4. To ensure that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect</p> <p><i>Commitment to equality and human rights is integrated into our business planning and delivery, including service level procurement, resource allocation and performance management.</i></p> <p><i>We will ensure that the impacts of all policies and services on all communities are assessed in order to deliver positive outcomes for residents, service users and staff, and we will seek to ensure that all services are accessible.</i></p> <p><i>We will ensure that the best possible quality local services are provided, appropriate to the diverse and changing needs of all our residents and service users.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of excellent analyses of and responses to local equality issues in business planning and delivery in local services • Continuously improving accessibility of services • Reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities • A lower incidence of hate crime and violence against women and girls • Improved accessibility to public spaces and transport • Limiting the impact of welfare reform and cuts on vulnerable people
<p>5. To develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people</p> <p><i>Our commitment to equality and diversity is integral to all employment policies, practices and procedures. We will recruit and retain a diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce and create an inclusive workplace where all of our diverse employees feel engaged and able to be themselves, and are responsive to local communities.</i></p> <p><i>We expect our entire workforce to play a role in achieving the equality strategy and will strengthen their skills to work with communities in new ways. We will promote a commitment to equality and human rights with those we work with and require it in those from whom we commission services.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public service workforce that reflects the community • Progress towards a living wage for all who live and work in Brent

Our strategic priorities and equality and human rights objectives

It is in our everyday work that we must achieve our equality and human rights objectives. These objectives are therefore rooted in the overarching priorities set out in the Brent Borough Plan (please see table below for details) and will inform the way that the council's Corporate Plan will be delivered.

Strategic Priority	Outcomes promised
BETTER LIVES	
Supporting local enterprise, generating jobs for local people, helping people into work and promoting fair pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth through continued regeneration • More opportunities for local businesses • More new local jobs will be created each year through local regeneration schemes, totalling 5,000 by 2019 • More people supported into work • More apprenticeships leading to full time employment • A closing of pay gaps compared with other London boroughs • A lower proportion of residents earning less than the London Living Wage, and progress of average incomes towards the London average • A reduction in the overall rate of unemployment in the borough, with progress towards the London average • A closing of the gap in employment levels between priority neighbourhoods and the rest of the borough
Making sure that our children and young people have access to the best education and training, achieve to their potential and have the best start in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places in Brent schools for all who need them • All Brent schools are good or outstanding • Children and young people, including those with special needs achieve well
Enabling people to live healthier lives and reducing health inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing GPs will be easier, and more treatments will be available in a community setting • More people living healthier and longer lives • A transformed system for mental health
Supporting vulnerable people and families when they need it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding procedures and outcomes for vulnerable adults are judged as amongst the best in London • Safeguarding procedures and outcomes for children and young people are judged as amongst the best in London • Families needing support get it when they need it most and become more independent • More provision and more choice for people needing care and support • Fostering and adoption outcome measures amongst the best in London • Vulnerable children and young people have high quality support when they need it and become more resilient • Outcome measures for those identified as vulnerable to domestic violence amongst the best in London

Strategic Priority	Outcomes promised
BETTER PLACE	
Making sure that Brent is an attractive place to live, with a pleasant, sustainable environment, clean streets and well-cared for parks and green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaner, safer streets and a healthier, greener environment • Outcome measures for street cleanliness and waste management and recycling amongst the best in London • Residents' satisfaction with the cleanliness and appearance of the borough's streets, parks and green spaces amongst the highest in London • More examples of communities taking action for themselves to care for their local parks and green spaces
Continuing to reduce crime, especially violent crime, and making people feel safer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of crime and the fear of crime amongst the lowest in London • No wards feature amongst the 10% of localities experiencing the highest crime levels in London • Significant reductions in violent crime, including domestic violence
Increasing the supply of affordable, good quality housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 5,000 affordable homes in the borough • All social housing in the borough will reach the decent homes standard
Providing good quality, accessible arts and leisure facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent sports, leisure and cultural facilities used by more people • Participation rates in sport, physical recreation and cultural activities amongst the highest in London
BETTER LOCAL	
Building community resilience and promoting citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of people who say that 'Brent is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together' will be amongst the highest in London
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 4,000 additional volunteers registered across the borough
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly more examples of communities taking action for themselves to improve the quality of life in their neighbourhoods
Making sure that everyone in the borough is able to participate in local democracy, has a fair say in the way that services are delivered, and is listened to and taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of residents will be registered to vote under the individual voter registration scheme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election turnouts amongst the highest in London
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving Brent Connects Forums, with higher participation rates year-on-year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly more young people participating in local democracy events and processes like the Youth Parliament
Working with partners to find new ways of providing services that are more finely tailored to individual, community and local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of examples of local services being materially influenced by user views
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of examples of new service models developed and run in partnership with local people and organisations • Access to all key services 24/7 via digital channels • Levels of public satisfaction with local services amongst the highest in London

Strategic Priority	Outcomes promised
BETTER WAYS OF WORKING	
An efficient and modern, customer-focused organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An independent, inclusive and thriving local voluntary sector • A skilled, motivated and effective workforce

Through delivering these strategic priorities, all council services will contribute to achieving the following equalities outcomes:

- transparent, up-to-date published information on community profiles and needs that is easily accessible to all local people and partner organisations
- increased participation in civic and community life amongst all communities, especially those who commonly experience barriers to participation
- an increase in the number of volunteers
- a vision, agreed with partners, residents and our different communities for a better future for the borough and the values, priorities and actions that will enable that vision to be achieved
- an increase in the number of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Brent
- external validation as an exemplar of good practice in equality and human rights
- evidence of excellent analyses of and responses to local equality issues in business planning and delivery in local services
- continuously improving accessibility of services
- reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities
- a lower incidence of hate crime and violence against women and girls
- improved accessibility to public spaces and transport
- limiting the impact of welfare reform and cuts on vulnerable people
- a public service workforce that reflects the community
- progress towards a living wage for all who live and work in the Borough.

The actions to be taken to achieve these objectives and outcomes over the coming year are set out in more detail in the Equality Action Plan and departmental equality action plans.

Roles and responsibilities

Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the Equality Strategy are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services.

Cabinet Members	The Cabinet is responsible for taking a lead in ensuring that the Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019 represents a robust and shared vision, meets the needs of the locality, is adopted across the council, and that measures are in place to monitor, challenge and review its progress.
Scrutiny Members	Scrutiny Members are responsible for challenging Cabinet members, officers and others about decisions impacting on equality and human rights issues and on the evidence base supporting those decisions. It also enables Members to capture the views of their constituents to

	provide community leadership.
Ward Members	Ward Members have a role to play in championing equal opportunities and promoting cohesion and fostering good relations within their constituencies. They are responsible for paying due regard to equality and human rights in all of their constituency work.
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	CMT is responsible for ensuring that the Equality Strategy is robust, integrated into all aspects of service planning and delivery, and is effectively implemented across the council. Individual members are expected to have oversight of the strategy in their areas of responsibility and ensure that information about the impact of their services on equality and human rights is gathered, made available and evaluated.
Directors and Service Heads	Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that managers and staff within their service areas understand their roles in implementing the Equality Strategy and that the strategy is monitored and reviewed.
Diversity Reference Group (DRG)	This senior strategic group acts as a Programme Board, responsible for driving the equality and human rights strategy and for monitoring the implementation of the strategy across the council. It ensures that evidence on the progress of the strategy is gathered and collated for challenge by the CMT and Members
Departmental Equality Groups (DEGs)	The DEGs form a link between the DRG and all council departments and services, acting as 'equality champions' to promote good practice on equality and human rights across all functions of the council.
Council-wide managers	All Brent managers are responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the strategy are pursued appropriately within their teams, for gathering and making available information about the impact of their work on different communities and for ensuring that individual staff members understand their particular responsibilities with regard to equality and human rights.
Council-wide staff	All council staff are responsible for conducting their work in a way that supports delivery of the strategy and which demonstrates the values of equality, respect, dignity and fairness and excellence.
Equality Team	The Equality Team, overseen by the HR Director, is responsible for the operational management of the strategy and its monitoring and review. The Team co-ordinates equalities and human rights information across the council and ensures that evaluative reports on progress are made available to the DRG and CMT.
HR Improvement Group	This group, comprising senior stakeholders from all areas of the council, is involved in consultation on workforce diversity and equality initiatives.
Trade Unions	Two recognised trade unions within the council are responsible for supporting their members on matters including diversity and equality and for ensuring that they are consulted on diversity and equality initiatives.

Implementation of the Equality Strategy

The Equality Action Plan sets out the key activities that are intended to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. The Action Plan is an annual plan: it will be monitored, reviewed and refreshed each year throughout the four-year timescale of the Strategy.

The Equality Strategy and Action Plan will be published on the council's website to enable wide access, transparency and scrutiny.

The Equality Strategy and Action Plan are supported by departmental-level equality action plans which highlight the key equalities priorities for each department.

Monitoring and Review

Progress against achievement of the equality and human rights objectives will be monitored across the council throughout the year, co-ordinated by the Equality Team.

The Diversity Reference Group will review progress reports against the Equality Strategy and Action Plan and against departmental level equality action plans, with recommended remedial actions where appropriate, every two months. The Corporate Management Team will receive monitoring and evaluation reports every six months.

An annual report evaluating progress and outcomes achieved will be reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and the GP Committee, with subsequent posting on the council's website.

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Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Introduction

This Action Plan sets out the key activities that are intended to achieve the objectives of the Equality Strategy. It is supported by departmental level equality action plans which set out how we will achieve our equality and human rights objectives in our everyday work. Departmental Equality Groups have developed these action plans and provide progress reports to Diversity Reference Group meetings.

The Action Plan will be monitored closely over the period, and amended where necessary to address any emerging issues or remedial needs. It will also be reviewed and refreshed annually throughout the timescale of the Strategy.

Equality objective 1: Equality information

Objective: To know and understand all of our communities

Outcomes

- Transparent, up-to-date published information on community profiles and needs is easily accessible to the council, local people and partner organisations
- Reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Review and strengthen monitoring systems across the council to ensure a consistent approach to gathering and recording equality data which is used to inform service planning and financial decisions	Head of Equality with Department Equality Leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring reports based on new systems in June and December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transparent, up-to-date published information on community profiles and needs is easily accessible to the council, local people and partner organisations• Reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities
Produce diversity profiles of Brent's communities and service users	Head of Equality with Business Intelligence team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated borough and ward diversity profiles made available and published on Brent Data by April 2015, and refreshed quarterly thereafter	

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Equality objective 2: Community engagement

Objective: To involve our communities effectively

Outcomes

- Increased participation in civic and community life amongst all communities, especially those who commonly experience barriers to participation
- An increase in the number of volunteers

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Explore new forms of creative community engagement to inform service provision and ensure best quality services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Director, Strategic Commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed new approach to community engagement and new community engagement structures rolled out through the year, with quarterly reports on impact • Policy to encourage staff to volunteer for local voluntary and community organisations rolled out, with quarterly impact reports • Provider to run Brent Citizen Volunteer Service identified by July 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents and service users – including under-represented groups – feel that they can participate in public life and that the council listens to them • An increase in the number of volunteers

Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Equality objective 3: Leadership and partnership

Objective: To demonstrate leadership in equalities and human rights, both within the council and amongst partners, and organisational commitment to excellence

Outcomes

- A vision, agreed with partners, residents and our different communities for a better future for the borough and the values, priorities and actions that will enable that vision to be achieved
- An increase in the number of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Brent
- External validation as an exemplar of good practice in equality and human rights

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Implement the Equality Strategy, through which Brent's approach to diversity, equality and cohesion is clearly articulated and understood by all partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Director with Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6- monthly outcome assessments from September 2015, with analyses published on the council's website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explicit commitment to equality and diversity at the heart of all borough and council planning • An increase in the number of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Brent • 'Excellent' assessment in the Equality Framework for Local Government • Improved standing on the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and a more inclusive workplace for LGBT staff • 'Excellent' level of the Healthy Workplace Charter
Ensure that equality and human rights values and objectives are fully reflected in the Partners for Brent Borough Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive with Head of Policy and Scrutiny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and human rights objectives reflected in the 2015-17 Borough Plan • Progress reports to DRG every 6 months from September 2015 	
Provide support and training to councillors to help them to demonstrate community leadership on diversity and equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Executive and Member Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress towards equality objectives scrutinised by Executive from September 2015 	
Become recognised as an exemplar of good practice on equality, diversity and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Director with Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly development reports to DRG on participation in the Business Disability Forum's Disability Standard from June 2015 • 'Excellent' assessment in the 	

Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

		<p>Equality Framework for Local Government achieved by September 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index from July 2015• 'Excellent' level of the Healthy Workplace Charter achieved by October 2015• Regular focus groups with different staff equality groups to inform planning to achieve improvement in these awards and benchmarks	
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Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Equality objective 4: Responsive services

Objective: To ensure that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect

Outcomes

- Evidence of excellent analyses of and responses to local equality issues in business planning and delivery in local services
- Continuously improving accessibility of services
- Reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities
- Improved accessibility to public spaces and transport
- Limiting the impact of welfare reform and cuts on vulnerable people

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Review and refresh systems for effective and efficient equality analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Equality Leads coordinated by Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes assessment based on revised equality analysis system by June 2015, with 6-monthly updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and corporate plan outcomes achieved • Reduced inequalities in quality of life outcomes for different communities • More accessible services which are appropriate to the diverse and changing needs of our residents • Improved accessibility to public spaces and transport • A lower incidence of hate crime and violence against women • Impact of welfare reform and cuts on vulnerable people lessened • Effective equality and diversity practice integrated into all business processes
Monitor progress towards our equality objectives and report on them at regular intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Equality Leads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on departmental equality action plans at DRG meetings every two months 	
Demonstrate that actions have been taken and improvements in equality outcomes have been delivered as a result of effective equality analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Equality Leads coordinated by Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports to DRG, CMT and Executive, on the cumulative equality impact of all decisions and changes, starting June 2015 	

Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

<p>Ensure that procured and commissioned services support work towards the council's equality objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement Team and Operational Director, Strategic Commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised equality requirements incorporated into all procurement processes from April 2015 • Outcomes assessment by October 2015, with 6-monthly subsequent updates 	
<p>Ensure that equality considerations are embedded into all business processes, such as financial and business planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Finance with Head of Policy and Scrutiny and Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality screening is integrated into business planning and budget setting templates from April 2015, with a review of effectiveness by January 2016 	
<p>Build on and strengthen community cohesion through work with partners to determine the relationship between diversity, equality and community cohesion in service provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Community Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages explored and identified, with Hate Crime and Prevent officers, with recommendations for action, by April 2015 • Review of implementation of recommendations by March 2016 	

Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Equality objective 5: Workforce

Objective: To develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people


Outcomes

- A public service workforce that reflects the community
- Progress towards a living wage for all who live and work in Brent
- Positive outcomes from staff surveys

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Review and strengthen monitoring systems related to our employment profile and its change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Director with Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual workforce equality report prepared by July 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value • Progress towards a living wage for all who live and work in Brent • Equality is integral to all employment processes and practices • The council workforce is representative of the local community at all levels • Increased proportion of BAME senior managers • Our employees feel engaged in the development and work of the council • Positive outcomes from staff surveys
Develop and deliver mentoring programme to support the career and personal development of council staff from groups under-represented at senior management levels and to broaden managers' understanding of staff experiences and barriers to career progression for some equality groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups with staff to develop programme by April 2015 • Programme proposal presented to DRG in May 2015 • Programme launched in September 2015 • 	
Provide an equality, diversity and human rights training programme tailored to the requirements of staff in different roles, such as customer-facing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Manager and Head of Equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New equality and diversity training programme implemented throughout the year, with 6-monthly evaluation reports to DRG • Recruitment and selection e-learning module with unconscious bias content is rolled out for all managers and elected members undertaking recruitment and selection from April 2015 	
Identify and address outstanding issues of equal pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Transactional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations from new Equal Pay Audit implemented from 	

Draft - Brent Council Equality Strategy Action Plan 2015 – 2016

	Services	April 2015, with 6-monthly evaluation reports to DRG	
Maintain oversight of the equalities implications of all corporate activities impacting on the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cara Davani, HR Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly reports to DRG and CMT on impacts of HR policies and restructurings 	
Review and refresh HR policies and processes from an equalities perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed HR policies reviewed from an equalities perspective and operating from April 2015, with quarterly reports to DRG Produce guidance on reasonable adjustments to assist managers to support disabled staff by July 2015 	
Deliver an annual programme of equality events to staff and key external partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Equality Leads with Equality Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black History Month in October 2015 International Day for Disabled People in December 2015 LGBT History Month events in February 2016 International Women’s Day in March 2016 Full programme of equality events for 2016/17 to be approved by DRG in January 2015 	

 Brent	<p style="text-align: center;">General Purposes Committee 25 February 2015</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Human Resources</p>
<p>For Action Wards affected: ALL</p>	
<p>Equality Policy</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Equality Policy sets out Brent's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and how the council will promote equality and diversity in everything that we do in order to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Brent. This will replace the council's existing Equality Policy and is aligned to the new Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The General Purposes Committee is asked to:
- a. agree the new Equality Policy
 - b. authorise the HR Director, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the relevant trade unions, to make such other changes as may be necessary from time to time to the Equality Policy and associated procedures to ensure they remain relevant and 'fit for purpose'.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Equality Policy defines the council's approach to equality and diversity, underpinned by the values of respect, fairness and excellence in services. It outlines the council's commitments to equality as a service provider, an employer and a locality leader and how the council will implement these commitments through our day to day activities. The policy will help to ensure that we fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and support our determination to be recognised as a model of excellent practice on equality and diversity.

- 3.2 The new Equality Policy replaces and builds upon Brent's existing Equality Policy to respond to our current context and align with the new Equality Strategy 2015 - 2019. The new policy retains the recognition that an individual's health and income status is an important consideration for our equalities work in addition to the equality characteristics protected by law. It provides more detail on the council's approach to equality and diversity and explains how we will implement our commitment to equality in our day to day work.
- 3.3 The Equality Team has consulted with the Diversity Reference Group, the Corporate Management Team, the HR Improvement Group and the trade unions on the new Equality Policy and their feedback has been incorporated.
- 3.4 Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, will be responsible for conducting themselves in line with the principles set out in the Equality Policy.
- 3.5 The Corporate Management Team will have overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the policy with support from the Diversity Reference Group and the Equality Team.

4.0 Implementation Date

- 4.1 It is recommended that the policy becomes live on 1 April 2015 and is introduced alongside Brent's new Equality Strategy 2015 – 2019.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications that impact on budgets.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The new Equality Policy will help the council to demonstrate that it is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and follows good practice.

7.0 Diversity Implications

- 7.1 The Equality Policy sets out how the council will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations in carrying out its day to day activities.

8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 8.1 The Equality Policy sets out principles for rewarding, recruiting and retaining a diverse, highly motivated and flexible workforce that is equipped to provide an excellent service to all our local communities. Consultation has taken place with the HR Improvement Group, the Diversity Reference Group, the trade unions and CMT and their feedback has been incorporated into the Equality Policy.

Background Papers

Contact Officers

Cara Davani
HR Director

Sarah Kaiser
Head of Equality

Meeting
Date

Version no.
Date

Equality Policy

December 2014



Human Resources

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1. Introduction

Brent Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and cohesion in everything we do – as a locality leader, as a provider and commissioner of services, and as an employer.

We aim to ensure that all our current and future residents, staff and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate services and equal opportunities regardless of their age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender identity and expression, marital status, nationality, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or health and income status.

2. Our Approach

The council's vision is to create opportunities for everyone who lives and works here to change their lives for the better. This vision is supported by the values of fairness, respect and excellence which are embedded and demonstrated in the delivery of our services and our approach to equality.

A commitment to equality and understanding of diversity are crucial to making our vision a reality. To ensure that all who live and work here have genuinely equal opportunities to improve their quality of life, we need to be mindful of how our policies and practices can affect people in different ways – because of their age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender identity, marital status, nationality, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and health and income status. We recognise that these factors shape not only our identities, but also our needs and our life outcomes.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty to make equality a greater part of the day-to-day business of public bodies. In carrying out all of our activities, Brent Council is required to consider how we can:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- encourage good relations between people from different groups.

Brent Council requires all decisions to take account of equalities considerations. We will carry out equality analysis of changes to policies, strategies and services to ensure that our policies and practices are fair, to help us to deliver the most effective and responsive services for local communities and to help us to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Brent will collect equalities information about our staff and residents to help us to:

- understand the needs of our diverse communities
- design policies and services which are effective and appropriate
- monitor our progress in meeting our equality objectives
- ensure we are treating people fairly
- demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and other statutory duties.

3. Policy Statement

Policy summary

Brent is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion; the council is determined to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights. The equality policy underpins the above commitment and sets out how we will promote diversity and equality in everything that we do to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Brent.

As a provider and commissioner of services, we will:

- always treat every customer as an individual and with respect

- improve our knowledge and understanding of all our communities so that we can ensure best quality services that are appropriate to the needs of our service users
- ensure that the potential impacts of all policies and services on all communities are assessed in order to deliver positive outcomes for residents and service users where possible
- ensure that all residents have equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process and feel that their voices are being heard
- ensure that our commitment to equality and diversity is integrated into procurement and commissioning processes.

As an employer, we will:

- recruit, retain and reward a diverse, highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce that is equipped to provide an excellent service to all our local communities
- use positive action measures to address the under-representation of any groups of people who share a protected characteristic in our workforce
- create an inclusive workplace where all of our diverse employees feel engaged and able to be themselves
- ensure that equality and diversity are integral to all employment policies, practices and procedures and that they are compliant with equalities legislation.

As a locality leader, we will:

- work with a wide range of partners to promote good relations between communities and address negative stereotyping of any groups
- build resilient, cohesive communities that take pride in and feel a sense of responsibility towards their neighbourhoods
- share good practice with partner agencies, local agencies and other relevant organisations
- tackle harassment relating to a person's age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, health and income status.

To fulfil all of these commitments, we will ensure that Elected Members, senior managers and staff have a robust understanding of their responsibilities under equalities legislation.

4. Definitions and general information

Equality

Brent Council understands 'equality' to be about fair and equal treatment. Critically, this does not mean treating everyone the same. Instead, this requires us to focus on improving equality of outcomes to effect meaningful change. We may need to respond to people in different ways in order to meet their particular needs and to address any disadvantages faced by people who share a protected characteristic.

Diversity

Brent Council understands 'diversity' to be about recognising and valuing difference. We believe that celebrating the rich diversity of our local community helps to make everyone feel valued and respected and to break down barriers between different groups. We are committed to recruiting, retaining and rewarding a diverse, highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce that is equipped to provide an excellent service to all our local communities

Resilient, cohesive communities

Brent Council aims to build resilient and cohesive communities. By 'resilient', we mean people and communities that are able to cope with changes in their lives and communities. By 'cohesive', we mean that people from different backgrounds will enjoy good relations and live and work comfortably together.

Protected characteristics

We use the term 'protected characteristics' to refer to the equality characteristics protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the Equality Act 2010. We recognise the important influence that the inter-relationship of these characteristics has on the identities, needs and outcomes of our residents and staff.

Discrimination

We use the term 'discrimination' to mean treating someone less favourably than someone else because of one of their protected characteristics. Forms of discrimination include:

- applying a policy to everyone which affects people with a certain equality characteristic more than anyone else – this is known as indirect discrimination
- treating someone less favourably than another person because they have a relationship with someone with an equality characteristic
- treating someone less favourably than another person because you mistakenly think they have an equality characteristic
- positive discrimination, where someone is treated more favourably than another person because of an equality characteristic
- failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and residents.

Age

'Age' refers to people of a particular age or age range.

Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination against younger people and older people. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about these groups can lead to discriminatory behaviour towards them and to their ongoing social and economic disadvantage.

Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of people of particular ages, especially children and vulnerable older people. Brent will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that people of all ages receive best quality services that meet their needs. Brent will involve people of different ages in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

By law, people cannot be treated less favourably in the workplace, or in training for work, because of their age.

Caring responsibilities

Brent Council recognises that many of our residents and staff have caring responsibilities for children or for ill, frail or disabled family members or friends who rely on them for care, attention and assistance with their daily routine. Caring responsibilities affect men, women and children. Many of these people will not consider themselves to be carers – they will think of themselves simply as a wife, husband, son, daughter, mum, dad or friend helping a loved one. These caring responsibilities may place an emotional, physical and financial strain on an individual.

As an employer, Brent Council recognises that people with caring responsibilities may need to work more flexibly and are entitled to time off for dependents to deal with unforeseen circumstances. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits.

Disability

'Disability' refers to anyone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Brent recognises that many impairments are not visible.

Examples of disabilities include:

- physical impairments or illnesses that affect mobility, such as arthritis, multiple sclerosis or a stroke
- facial disfigurements
- sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing
- mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression
- learning disabilities
- developmental conditions, such as dyslexia and autism
- long-term health conditions such as HIV, cancer and diabetes.

Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination against disabled people. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about disabled people can lead to discriminatory behaviour towards them and to their ongoing social and economic disadvantage. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate disability discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

As a service provider, Brent Council is required to make anticipatory reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled services users have equitable access to all our services. Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of disabled residents. Brent will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that disabled people receive best quality services that meet their needs. Brent will involve disabled people in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

As an employer, Brent Council is required to make reasonable adjustments to remove any disadvantages faced by disabled staff and job applicants when applying for, doing and keeping their jobs. Brent Council has been awarded the Two Ticks positive about disability symbol by Job Centre Plus because we are committed to employing and developing disabled people. We offer guaranteed interviews to all disabled job applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy. We make reasonable adjustments to working practices and the working environment to help disabled staff carry out their jobs effectively and stay in employment.

The following conditions are not considered to be disabilities and are not covered by this policy:

- addictions, such as alcoholism and drug dependency
- hay fever
- problems with standard vision that can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses.

Brent Council is aware of its responsibilities to individuals with addictions – both as an employer and a service provider – and is conscious of the impact of substance misuse on mental health.

Gender identity

The Equality Act 2010 protects people who undergo gender reassignment – that is, who transition from one gender to another – from discrimination. Brent Council recognises that a broader range of people may experience atypical gender identity and the ways that people express their gender roles may vary widely.

Brent Council is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination against transgender people and people who experience gender variance. We will, as far as possible, consult with transgender people on issues which affect them to improve services and their quality of life. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of transphobia, discrimination, harassment and victimisation against transgender people.

Brent Council will respect the preferred gender identity of our residents and staff.

Marriage and civil partnership

Brent Council recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against people who are married or in a civil partnership in employment.

Pregnancy and maternity

Brent Council recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against people who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby.

We recognise that it is a woman's right to breastfeed a baby in public without interference. We will ensure that the public areas of our buildings provide a welcoming environment for women to feel comfortable to breastfeed their babies.

Brent Council will not reject a job application or deny existing staff opportunities for training, transfers, promotions or other work-related benefits because of pregnancy or maternity. In recruitment, we will never ask interview questions related to pregnancy, maternity or childcare.

Race

'Race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Brent Council is committed to tackling any discrimination based on race. We are conscious of the racism and disadvantages faced by our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, especially new migrant groups, refugees and Gypsy and Traveller communities. We recognise that negative attitudes, common stereotypes and structural inequalities in wider society can lead to racism and to ongoing social and economic disadvantage for some ethnic groups. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of racism, harassment and victimisation and to promote good relations between all our local communities. Brent will involve people from all our local communities in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

As an employer, Brent aims to build a diverse workforce that represents the local community. We will use positive action measures to address the under-representation of some ethnic groups in different parts of our workforce.

Religion and belief

'Religion and belief' includes all religious and philosophical beliefs that affect an individual's life choices, including a lack of belief (that is, atheism).

Brent Council is committed to tackling any discrimination based on religion or belief. We recognise that negative attitudes and common stereotypes about different religious groups can lead to discriminatory behaviour and to social and economic disadvantages. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with faith groups and other agencies to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to religion or belief and to promote good relations between all our local communities. Brent will involve faith groups in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them.

Brent Council supports activities organised by religious groups which are inclusive and accessible to all our communities. We do not support exclusive religious activities or activities that promote any specific religious or ideological views.

Brent Council recognises that our staff have a diverse range of religious customs and practices. Some staff may need to work more flexibly to observe their religious or cultural practices. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits. Brent Council will not permit staff to refuse to carry out work duties because of their religious beliefs where this could affect our ability to provide a service without discrimination.

Sex

'Sex' refers to men and women.

Brent Council is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination and sexism. Negative attitudes and common stereotypes based on gender are damaging to both men and women. We recognise that women are far more likely than men to experience sex discrimination which contributes to social and economic disadvantages. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to promote gender equality, to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, and to prevent all forms of violence and abuse against women and girls.

As a service provider, Brent Council will provide targeted services to meet the needs of men and women where these are different or to address disadvantages faced by men or women. Brent will involve men and women in reviewing and making decisions about proposals and services that affect them. When consulting with local communities, we will be conscious of the need to engage with female as well as male representatives.

As an employer, Brent Council recognises that female staff and single parents (men and women) may need to work more flexibly. We will accommodate these requests where operational need permits. We will use positive action measures to address the under-representation of women in different parts of our workforce.

Sexual orientation

'Sexual orientation' refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. Brent Council recognises that an individual can also have a broader sense of their sexual identity and may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) or heterosexual/straight. We are also mindful that fear of discrimination and prejudice may prevent people from being open about their sexual orientation.

Brent Council is committed to tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation. Brent Council will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to eliminate all forms of homophobia, biphobia, discrimination, harassment and victimisation against LGB people.

As a service provider, Brent Council recognises that the LGB community is diverse with a wide range of different needs. We will, as far as possible, consult with LGB people on issues which affect them to improve services and their quality of life. We will provide targeted services to meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people where these are different to each other or to heterosexual/straight people or to address disadvantages faced by LGB people.

As an employer, all our employment policies and benefits will apply equally to people in same sex and opposite sex relationships.

Health and income status

Brent Council recognises that an individual's health and income status has a significant influence on their needs and life outcomes. Although health and income status are not protected from discrimination by law, we are committed to tackling health and socio-economic inequalities in the local area.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Everyone who works for Brent Council, whether directly or through commissioning, is responsible for conducting themselves in line with the principles set out in this policy.

Brent's Equality Strategy sets out roles and responsibilities for upholding and implementing the Council's equality and diversity commitments and procedures.

6. Applying the equality policy

Brent's Equality Strategy sets out how effective diversity and equality practice will be fully integrated into everything the council does in line with the principles detailed in this policy.

Brent's Customer Promise sets out our commitment to providing good quality, easily accessible services and information to all customers and details how we apply our equality principles in customer services.

Brent's Recruitment and Selection Policy sets out how we apply our equality principles in recruitment.


Brent's Code of Conduct sets out the behaviours we expect all staff to uphold in relation to equality, diversity and treating people with dignity and respect.

Brent's Grievance Policy sets out how staff can resolve bullying and harassment issues at work.

All policies and procedures at Brent will be screened to assess their relevance to equality and will be subject to equality analysis to ensure that they are fair and non-discriminatory.

The overall implementation of this policy will be monitored by Brent's Corporate Management Team with support from the Diversity Reference Group and the Equality Team.

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 Brent	<p>General Purposes Committee 25 February 2015</p> <p>Report from the Director of Human Resources</p>
<p>For Action Wards affected: ALL</p>	
<p>Workforce Strategy 2015 - 2019</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This is the first council-wide Workforce Strategy and action plan in Brent. The strategy sets out the means by which Brent Council will engage, develop, enable and empower its workforce in order to achieve the vision and aspirations of the council and its partners. In order to meet the ongoing challenges faced by the council, the workforce will need to be adaptable, motivated to achieve Brent's vision, and able to deliver excellent public services to meet desired outcomes.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to review and approve the Workforce Strategy 2015-2019 and accompanying action plan.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Workforce Strategy 2015 – 2019 has been developed to support delivery of the council's people management priorities for the next four years.
- 3.2 The Workforce Strategy has identified five strategic priorities that lead to the creation of a number of related activities as follows:
1. Recruitment and retention;
 2. Leadership and management;
 3. Skills development;
 4. An efficient and modern, customer-focused organisation;
 5. Understanding and valuing diversity.

- 3.3 The Workforce Strategy is closely aligned to the council's Human Resources Strategy, which has previously been agreed by GP Committee which seeks to build a workforce that:
- is motivated, high performing and committed to our core values;
 - delivers excellent services to residents;
 - welcomes innovation, partnership and integrated working across services;
 - works to high professional standards;
 - is able to adapt to changing work processes, structures and new technology with ease.
- 3.4 The strategy outlines the local and national context, including reductions to the council's budget, new service delivery arrangements and the changing labour market. It places the priorities contained within the strategy in the context of these external factors.
- 3.5 The strategy also sets out the council's current workforce profile, examining the diversity characteristics of the workforce including how staff with different equality characteristics are distributed throughout the organisation.
- 3.6 When drafting the Workforce Strategy, feedback from DMT's, CMT, HRIG, Trade Unions and the council's liP Assessor was used to inform the content and recommended actions.
- 3.7 The Workforce Strategy reflects the council's priorities and the implications for its workforce as it moves into a leaner phase. The action plan supporting the strategy will be reviewed annually.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Any costs associated with the delivery of the workforce strategy will be accommodated from within existing council budgets.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The proposed Workforce Strategy 2015 – 2019 examines the representation of groups of staff pertaining to various equality characteristics at different levels across the council. The accompanying action plan includes measures to develop a workforce that is proportionately representative of all levels of the communities that the council serves through the roll out of Brent's Equality Strategy.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 The body of the paper concerns itself with staffing issues.

Background Papers

None.

Contact Officer

Cara Davani, HR Director

Draft Workforce Strategy 2015 -2019

February 2015



Draft Workforce Strategy 2015 -2019

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Foreword

Our Workforce Strategy 2015 – 2019 sets out how we will engage, develop, enable and empower a workforce that will achieve the vision and aspirations of Brent Council and its partners, delivering excellent public services to our communities, creating the right opportunities for all who live and work here, and changing lives in Brent for the better.

Much has been achieved in this respect already through the rollout of the Council's earlier People Strategy. These achievements are summarised here and include the enhancement of health and well-being initiatives for staff, such as the launch of our new employee assistance programme, the roll out of new flexible working policies and the expansion of our apprenticeship programme. However, we need to do even more to continue improving our workforce and ensure that it is properly equipped to meet future challenges.

We are operating in a context that is financially extremely challenging, and there is no doubt that this will have profound implications for our workforce. Much is uncertain but, to meet this challenge, we need to work more creatively, more efficiently and more effectively in partnership with other organisations. Most importantly, we need staff who are motivated and committed to our vision, who are flexible and able to adapt quickly to a rapidly changing context, and equipped with the skills and knowledge to achieve genuine excellence and deliver the outcomes we aspire to.

This strategy seeks to ensure that these goals are achieved.

Cara Davani

HR Director, Brent Council

1. About the Strategy

1.1 Introduction

Public sector organisations, including Brent Council face some serious challenges over the coming years. Significant public spending and efficiency pressures, an ageing workforce, shortages of some key workers, changing skill requirements, new technologies, new ways of working, contributing to a sustainable environment, ensuring that the needs of the communities we serve are understood and that cohesion between different communities is promoted and maintained, competition for high calibre employees: these and many more. And there will be fresh challenges just beyond the horizon.

It is essential that we plan for these challenges and for future demand. It is clear that, to meet the financial challenges in particular, the nature of our workforce will need to change. We are going to need a streamlined, flexible workforce that can adapt quickly to changing needs and circumstances. We need staff who are committed to our vision, who are motivated and able to anticipate and respond to customer needs, and who have with the skills and knowledge to achieve genuine excellence in service delivery. We need staff who, above all, are able to focus on and deliver the outcomes we aspire to for the people who live and work in Brent. The Workforce Strategy provides us with a framework for achieving this.

1.2 Our vision, our priorities for the borough and our values

Our vision for the borough of Brent, agreed and shared with partners and residents through the borough planning process, is to make Brent a place that creates – through excellence in all local services – the right opportunities for all who live and work here, and to change lives for the better. The priority objectives through which we intend to work with our communities and our partners to achieve this vision are set out in the Borough Plan. Our priorities are:

1. Better lives

This means:

- making sure that local people have the best possible life chances, regardless of their starting position
- supporting local enterprise, generating jobs for local people, helping people into work and promoting fair pay
- making sure that our schools are amongst the best and that our children and young people achieve to their potential
- enabling people to live healthier lives and reducing health inequalities
- supporting vulnerable people and families when they need it.

2. Better place

This means:

- making sure that Brent is an attractive place to live, with a pleasant environment, clean streets, well-cared for parks and green spaces
- continuing to reduce crime, especially violent crime, and making people feel safer
- increasing the supply of affordable, good quality housing
- supporting good quality, accessible arts and leisure facilities.

3. Better locally

This means:

- building resilience and promoting citizenship, fairness and responsibility amongst local people and strengthening the sense of community amongst the people who live and work here
- promoting cohesion and integration amongst our communities

- making sure that everyone has a fair say in the way that services are delivered, that they are listened to and taken seriously
- making sure that inequalities in the quality of life in different parts of the borough are tackled by a stronger focus on local needs
- building partnership – between local service providers and between local services and residents – to find new ways of providing services that are more finely tailored to individual, community and local needs.

The actions we take to achieve our priorities are underpinned by our **core values**. These are:

- Fairness – we are driven by a determination to reduce inequality and injustice.
- Respect for people – we actively engage with our residents and staff, seek their views, and use them to shape our decision-making.
- Valuing diversity – we plan and respond to the needs of our different communities, challenge discrimination, value contributions from all and are champions of equalities and human rights.
- Excellence in all our services – we strive to achieve the very best standards of service for all our residents.

These values inform what we do and how we do it. They are not new. For example, the council has been focused on excellent customer-focused services that deliver improving outcomes for some years. Equally, fairness, respect for people and valuing diversity is built into everything we do. But making our values an explicit foundation for our workforce strategy is important. They apply to everyone working on behalf of the council including all staff and members.

1.3 Achieving our vision

To achieve our vision and bring about real and sustainable improvements in the lives of local people, we need a workforce of the highest quality: skilled and motivated, confident and flexible, knowledgeable about and connected with our local communities, committed to our vision and immersed in our values. We recognise that our greatest asset in meeting future challenges is our people and that developing our workforce to meet to these challenges is critical. We want to have a workforce that is able to respond proactively to emerging national and local priorities. We want to be an exemplary employer able to attract and retain the best staff. And we want to be a modern, efficient organisation that delivers value for money.

1.4 Workforce Strategy Priorities

The priorities, objectives and expected outcomes of our Workforce Strategy are therefore as follows:

Priority	Objective	Outcomes
Recruitment and retention	To make sure that we recruit, retain and appropriately reward a diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong recruitment and retention rates • Improved applicant field • Solutions to hard to fill posts • Awards that enhance Brent’s reputation as an employer of choice • liP Gold Standard • Positive outcomes from staff surveys • Apprenticeship targets of 100 job opportunities with the council achieved by 2016, including targets for Looked After Children
Leadership and Management	To develop leadership and management effectiveness and consistency in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liP Gold Standard • Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance

	management practice across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More internal staff with the skills and capacity to be recruited as senior managers from within the organisation • A workforce that is more reflective of the community at senior levels • Corporate priority outcomes achieved • Improving positive outcomes from staff surveys
Skills Development	To plan, deliver and evaluate learning and development programmes and activities that support all our staff in developing the skills they need to perform effectively, both now and in the future, and to develop professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More management vacancies filled from within • Employees and managers across the organisation able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities • Direct link between learning and development initiatives and performance improvement demonstrated • Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter Brent employees or contractors • Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year • High levels of compliance with mandatory training
An efficient and modern, customer-focused organisation	To ensure that excellent services are delivered to all residents and service users through a focus on organisational effectiveness, high performance and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services that are recognised by users and residents as improved • Targeted efficiency savings achieved • New partnerships and service delivery models developed and implemented with improved outcomes • Improved attendance levels
Understanding and valuing diversity	To develop the workforce, through targeted recruitment and development, so that it is proportionately representative at all levels of the communities we serve, and so that the diverse needs of the community are understood and responded to effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriately representative workforce • Increased BME and female representation at senior levels • Increased representation of disabled employees across the workforce • All council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value • Engagement and participation across all communities • More accessible services • Reduced inequalities in service outcomes

1.5 How the Strategy was developed

The Workforce Strategy is rooted in Brent's 2015 – 2019 Human Resources Strategy, which seeks to build a workforce that:

- Is motivated, high performing and committed to our core values
- Delivers excellent services to residents
- Welcomes innovation, partnership and integrated working across services
- Works to high professional standards

- Is able to adapt to changing work processes, structures and new technology with ease

The Workforce Strategy was developed through:

- review of the Borough and Corporate Plan and other key plans and documents to ensure that the council's priorities and their implications for our workforce are properly reflected in the strategy
- an analysis of data about the council's current workforce
- consideration of key issues affecting local authorities in general and Brent in particular
- discussion with the senior management team about the needs of the workforce for the future
- interviews with senior managers from across the council to establish workforce needs within and across departments
- discussions with the Trade Unions
- skills analysis and the review of the outcomes of the 2010 – 2014 People Strategy.

1.6 What we have achieved so far

In today's context, workforce planning in local authorities has never been more important. But workforce planning is not new to Brent. A review of our 2010-2014 People Strategy has shown how we have been continuously reviewing the services that are essential to residents and users and how best they can be delivered, exploring the most appropriate delivery structures, and analysing, enabling, developing and supporting the skills, behaviours, attitudes and performance that we need from our employees. Workforce planning has helped to ensure that the impact of change on our workforce is clearly understood, effectively communicated and built into our corporate and service plans, our financial plans and our training plans.

The outcomes of the **2010-14 People Strategy Review** highlighted a range of achievements over the period, against the Strategy's workforce objectives. For example:

- **To develop strong leadership:** Full staff surveys and mini surveys across the council confirmed positive perceptions of managers amongst staff, and a willingness to 'go the extra mile'. Downsizing of the council was achieved and effectively managed as part of our drive to service transformation and efficiency savings. Linked key performance indicators were established for people, performance and budget management. Our Human Resources function was restructured to better meet the needs of the council, and a revised capability procedure was implemented along with new grievance and disciplinary policies and other key policies.
- **To reconfigure the organisation in line with One Council principles:** A new senior management structure was implemented to better meet the needs of the changing organisation. An *Employee Benefits* review was undertaken, successfully bringing together and consolidating terms and conditions of employment for all staff on NJC terms and conditions. The working week was harmonised across the council to 36 hours (40 hours for key graded staff). A new Oracle HR/Payroll system was introduced to deliver enhanced staff and management self-service, data management and reporting. The London Living Wage was made a minimum requirement for all non-school permanent staff, and its adoption was recommended to schools.
- **To support effective change management:** Change management training and executive coaching was provided for managers. Specific training on change initiatives has been provided to support departments and teams where needed – in the case of Welfare Reform changes, for example. The council's *Change Managing Policy* was reviewed to encourage greater flexibility and adaptability. Project management training for managers was strengthened. These developments helped to support the effective management of a number of restructurings within the council, including that of the *Brent Integrated Support (BIBS)*, which led to streamlining and service efficiencies.

- **To build an adaptable and efficient workforce:** An enhanced flexible working policy was introduced to enable a more agile and responsive workforce. *Flexible and Smarter Ways of Working* workshops were delivered across the council. London Weighting was harmonised and consolidated. Corporate recruitment was reviewed to create a more streamlined and business-focused recruitment service. The quality of recruitment material and application packs was improved to better present the council as an employer of choice. A new framework for engagement with trade unions was successfully implemented, resulting in closer working relationships and improved consultation. The number of interims and consultants working for the council was reduced. A programme of *Ready, Steady, Go* activities supported preparations for the move to the Civic Centre, with a 93% employee attendance rate achieved. These improvements contributed to the council's achievement of *Investors in People* accreditation at Silver level.
- **To fill skills and resource gaps:** A restructuring of the corporate learning and development function was successfully completed. A new mentoring scheme was introduced, which included access to external mentors. 93% of training participants reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied that course attendance benefited them as individuals.
- **To recruit, retain and develop motivated and talented people:** A new apprentice programme was launched, to recruit 100 apprentices over the next three years; 21 apprentices have already begun the programme in various departments across the council, one of whom has already found permanent employment with the Council. We see this programme as a potentially significant tool for recognising and developing local talent and helping to meet the council's future workforce requirements. At 85%, Brent has one of the highest retention rates in the country for graduates completing the graduate scheme. In 2013, all of the council's business support activities were integrated, resulting in standardisation of processes, financial efficiencies and a more streamlined service. Employee demographic data was refreshed, with a 77% response rate across the eight of the nine diversity characteristics, indicating a growing confidence in the council's commitment to equality and human rights.

Over the coming years we will build on these achievements and continue to systematically develop and improve the skills of our managers and staff so that they are in the best possible position to respond flexibly to new challenges and deliver the improved outcomes for local people that the council is determined to see.

1.7 Structure of the document

The remainder of the document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the national and local context for Brent's workforce
- Section 3 sets out our current workforce profile and characteristics
- Section 4 summarises the future skills needs identified through audits and reviews and staff and manager feedback
- Section 5 outlines the key actions proposed to meet the Strategy objectives and achieve its outcomes
- Section 6 sets out roles and responsibilities with regard to the Strategy
- Section 7 describes how the strategy will be implemented, monitored and reviewed

2. The national and local context

2.1 Budgetary and workforce reductions

The Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2012 required us to identify significant savings

across the council. This is inevitably having a huge impact on public services, requiring a smarter allocation of resources, more integrated partnership working, joint commissioning, and greater flexibility in the delivery of services. In short, the council has to deliver better services, in new ways, in order to ensure that the needs of Brent residents are met.

These changes have meant that the size of the council's workforce has already declined significantly. The total number of staff employed has fallen by more than 20%, from 3,172 (2,873 FTEs) in March 2010 to 2,328 (2,144 FTEs) in January 2014. In addition, the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, agreed by Full Council in February 2013, forecasts that further reductions of £53m will be needed in the council's budget by 2016/17. Essentially, by 2018, the council's budget will have been cut by half. A further significant decline in overall staff numbers will therefore be unavoidable.

The council is determined to limit as far as possible the direct impact on existing staff and to support them through these changes, by, for example, reducing numbers of agency workers, freezing vacancies in the lead up to restructurings, offering targeted voluntary redundancy and providing redeployment and reskilling opportunities wherever possible.

2.2 External Policy Framework

The external policy framework has also changed significantly. Universal credit and other welfare reforms, personalisation in social care, National Health Service reforms, early help for children in need, changes to the role of councils in relation to schools and support for children with special needs, and the government's localism agenda all have implications for the way we deliver services. The impact of housing and labour market conditions in London also has a significant impact on the council's ability to recruit and retain staff.

The council needs to continue adapting to this changing context, and this has significant implications for our workforce needs. Our workforce planning must reflect the changing ways the council enables, commissions and delivers services within our local community. New ways of working in the Civic Centre and other buildings, changes to the way we organise the delivery of services, and the changing needs and demands of the people we serve, all require a fundamentally different approach to working and doing business.

2.3 New service delivery arrangements

The council has already made significant changes to its service delivery arrangements. These include:

- Establishment of Brent Customer Services, which brought together the main customer facing services in the council;
- Integration of professional and business support services to develop *Brent's Integrated Business Support Service*;
- Process/customer 'journey' reviews in revenues and benefits, adult social care, and housing needs;
- Fundamental changes to the service offer and service provision arrangements for learning disability day services, libraries, waste and street cleaning, highways, parking, children's centres, special education needs and school improvement services;
- Major commissioning and procurement activities, including the commissioning of adult social care, children's social care, supporting people services and temporary accommodation, and the outsourcing of facilities management.

We need to make sure that we have a workforce with the capacity and skills to monitor and manage these new arrangements, and to contribute to further innovation. Effective skills for commissioning and procurement will be key, as will client side contract management.

2.4 Focus on customers

A key element in the work undertaken by the council in its transformation programme to date has been the strengthening of our focus on customers. A structure and staffing review carried out for the council in 2009, for example, found that a relatively small proportion of staff was employed in customer facing roles. Organisational and service changes since then have aimed at increasing the proportion of staff time spent on customer facing roles. As a result, the proportion of staff working in customer facing roles increased by 10% between 2009 and 2013.

The council's current customer access strategy reinforces the council's commitment to the customer and the relationship between the customer and the council in the future.

2.5 New structure and staffing arrangements

Our structure and staffing changes over the past three years led to the introduction of a new management model, harmonised pay and conditions and a new core contract. New departmental and senior management structures are also in place.

On-going change in the organisation, including the transfer of functions as part of the changing way we work with partners and the development of new delivery mechanisms, will require a workforce that is flexible and able to adapt to changing structures.

2.6 Flexible working

The council has a flexible workforce. New flexible working policies have been implemented to enable our people to work more flexibly in line with new service arrangements. Our HR strategy acknowledges the impact that flexible working will have on the relationship between employees and managers. Performance is being measured on outcomes and results, not the need for physical presence and hours worked.

2.7 New technology and systems

Our business strategy encourages Brent's customers, partners and residents to do more business online. Using mobile and web technology, more of our services will become e-enabled. For most people, but not all, their initial point of contact with the council in future will be online.

Our IT strategy supports this shift. Mobile technologies such as smartphones, data pens and tablets allow staff in the field to access key customer data and complete transactions at the point of contact. As a result, staff will be more self-sufficient and able to carry out tasks remotely in line with our new flexible working arrangements.

New systems such as Oracle HR and Payroll being introduced will create greater efficiencies across the council.

2.8 Partnership and integrated working

Strengthening partnership working and more integrated ways of service planning, commissioning and delivery are important strategic priorities for the council. The *Oracle Shared Service Project* has seen Brent work alongside five other London boroughs to achieve service improvements in finance, procurement and HR through the new Oracle system. In areas such as Children and Young People, occupational groups across Brent's Children's Partnership are working together, increasingly using common practices and approaches. 2014 has also seen the implementation of joint arrangements for shared resources with Barnet for Registration and Nationality services.

2.9 Responding to labour market pressures

Labour market pressures are always very fluid, and having good market intelligence data is vital to ensure that the council is well placed to recruit people with the right skill sets and experience. Equally important is the need for the council to remain competitive in the market both to recruit and retain staff.

Currently, there are pockets of professional roles that the council finds hard to recruit. These include specialist managerial roles such as those in procurement, adult social care and children's social care, social workers in children's social care and surveyors. There are also difficulties sourcing people in public health and in transportation.

The unemployment rate in Brent has consistently been some 2 -3% above London and the UK rate for the past 15 years. Working with partners to address this and create more job opportunities for local people is a key priority for the council. As one of the biggest employers in the borough, we need to look for more ways to bring more local people into the council's workforce.

3. Our Workforce Profile

The council needs an appropriately balanced work profile – in terms of age and representativeness of the community – in order to meet our future workforce requirements and help achieve the prioritised outcomes for our communities. An analysis of Brent's workforce for 2013-14 shows that an overall profile as set out in the following table.

Headcount	FTE	Female	BAME	Disabled	Sexuality (LGBT categories)	Religion (% collected)
2378	2,301	65% (65%)	62% (61%)	8% (6%)	3%	64%

A more detailed analysis reveals the following characteristics within this profile:

Age: The largest age group in Brent's workforce is staff aged 41 – 50. The proportion of staff aged 16 – 39 has increased over the past year, while the proportion of staff aged 40 – 64 has fallen. Brent has a young workforce compared to other London boroughs.

Disability: Brent has the 5th highest proportion of disabled staff of all London boroughs, although the council recognises that there is still under-reporting in this area. The number of staff declaring a disability increased over the past year, however, even though staffing levels were reduced, indicating that disabled staff were not disadvantaged by change programmes. There is a correlation between age and disability – older staff are more likely to be disabled. Adults Social Care has the highest proportion of disabled staff across the council.

Ethnicity: The ethnic diversity of Brent's workforce closely reflects the community that we serve. Brent has the highest proportion of BAME staff of all London boroughs. However, BAME staff are unevenly distributed throughout the workforce and are under-represented at senior management levels although we still have the 4th highest number of BAME staff at senior levels across London. Asian staff are more likely to work on a part time basis than staff of other ethnicities.

Gender: Brent's workforce has a high proportion of female staff overall, but these are unevenly distributed throughout the workforce. Women make up more than 50% of the Corporate Management Team, but are under-represented at HAY grade management levels, making up

only 45% of staff, compared with 65% of the overall workforce. Women are also under-represented in Environment and Neighbourhood Services and Finance and IT departments. Women are far more likely than men to work part-time.

Gender identity and expression: 1% of staff have declared that they are transgender. GIRES estimates that 1% of the UK population experience gender variance and 0.02% of the UK population will undergo gender transition.

Religion or belief: 36% of staff who responded to questions about equality characteristics preferred not to say whether or not they had a religion. 86% of those who did respond have a religion or belief, the other 14% having no religion or beliefs. This reflects the makeup of our local community and is far higher than the proportion of the UK general population reporting a religion or belief. In comparison to the local community, Muslim staff are under-represented in Brent's workforce.

Sexual orientation: 3% of staff have declared that they are LGB. For benchmarking purposes, it is estimated that 6% of the population is LGB. LGB staff are equally split between men and women. It is likely that there is under-reporting in this area.

The overall picture, in terms of a representative workforce, is a positive one reflecting the focused actions taken by the council in recent years. Last year's achievements included, for example: the establishment of a Diversity Reference Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, to champion equality and diversity; *Open Doors* events to mark *International Day for Disabled People* and *International Women's Day*; Black History Month celebrations; a series of *Ways to Wellbeing* events, encouraging staff to take simple actions to enhance their wellbeing; a move to the new Civic Centre, which has provided multi-faith prayer facilities and has significantly improved accessibility for disabled staff; a programme to recruit 100 apprentices over the next three years, opening up access to job opportunities; *Investors in People* accreditation at Silver level, in recognition of our good practice people management; becoming a *London Living Wage* employer, addressing inequalities in the pay structure; a revised *Recruitment and Selection* policy, requiring all recruitment panels to be balanced in gender and ethnicity; roll-out of the council's new *Flexible Working Policy*, giving far more staff access to flexible working practices; accreditation as a *Two Ticks* employer, recognising our commitment to empowering disabled people on our staff.

These achievements notwithstanding, there is, as always, still more that we have to do. In particular:

- Diversity at the most senior levels of the council's workforce is lower than expected, with the under-representation of BAME people in senior management especially marked. In addition, promotion rates for BAME staff are lower than would be expected from the overall demographic profile.
- While the proportion of disabled staff compares favourably with most local authorities, it remains the case that disabled candidates are still less likely to be employed than expected.
- A high proportion of staff did not disclose their disability status (19%), ethnicity (18%), religion or belief (36%) or sexual orientation (37%), which suggests a lack either of confidence or of engagement, or of both, in workforce equality initiatives.

4. Future Skills Needs

This section summarises the skills, behaviours and knowledge that have been identified as being of importance for staff in the future. They are organised under ten key headings, based on the contextual analysis above, and also on previous reviews and skills audits and staff and manager feedback across the council. The list is not exhaustive. Some are generic and relevant to a number of staff groups, some are more focused on managers, and some are relevant to particular service areas. Most are consistent with the skills requirements identified by many other public sector organisations.

Anticipating and managing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the local context and borough and council priorities • Anticipating and planning for the future • Managing change for continuous improvement • Generating income • Commissioning, procurement and risk management • IT skills – as a result of the increasing importance of technology • Flexible working – ability to self-manage, time manage and work in isolation; prioritisation and smart working
Focusing on the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with residents and service users • Working with service users to improve needs analysis and service delivery and outcomes • Responsive customer service
Evidence-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting and analysing management information, and making judgments and formulating policy change based on evidence • Data protection and compliance • Risk management – balancing innovation with sound decision making and planning
Leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching, mentoring and developing staff • Managing conflict, challenging others and giving feedback in difficult situations • Strategy and planning • Equalities and human rights • Financial skills, including budget monitoring and management, ensuring value for money and forecasting • Managing service delivery • Contract management • Lean management processes • Performance management, including evaluation and feedback • Commissioning and procurement • Programme and project management • Client-side management • Interview and questioning skills
Partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing skills – important when working across boundaries / departments / remits where there is no formal authority • Partnership working and involving and engaging stakeholders • Working with external suppliers or providers
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills – the softer skills of listening, questioning to establish information and develop understanding of requirements • Writing skills, including report writing • Event management

The planning and targeting of workforce learning and development opportunities, within departments as well as corporately, will need to reflect these needs.

The **Corporate Learning and Development** offer to address our skills needs will be organised into the following categories:

- **Personal Development** – e.g. personal effectiveness; health and wellbeing; career management.
- **Professional Development** – writing; customer care; training and facilitation; project management; IT; specialist (such as investigations); mentoring.
- **Essential** – e.g. health and safety; data protection; and equalities.
- **Management Development** – e.g. Brent manager essentials.
- **Induction** – e.g. corporate induction; manager induction.
- **Trainee Programmes** – e.g. apprenticeships; national graduates; graduate initiatives.
- **Organisational** – e.g. support for organisational change projects; work placements etc.

5. Workforce Strategy Priorities and Key Actions 2015 – 2018

The priorities of the Workforce Strategy have been developed to reflect the background context and analyses set out in earlier sections. The following table outlines the key actions that will be taken to achieve the objectives of the Strategy, and the outcomes they are expected to lead to.

Priority and objective	Key Actions	Outcomes
<p>Recruitment and retention</p> <p>To make sure that we recruit, retain and appropriately reward a diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of effective workforce planning in all service areas • Review Brent’s reward and recruitment strategies to ensure that they remain competitive in the labour market and that they appropriately reflect talent, contribution and extra effort • Review the use of executive search to ensure high quality candidates from a range of diverse backgrounds • Raise Brent’s profile through articles in trade magazines/speaking at conferences • Make submissions for awards to raise Brent’s profile as an excellent place to work • Run targeted recruitment campaigns to ensure we recruit sufficient specialists where required • Identify and implement new approaches to address the issues related to hard to fill positions (e.g. Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care, Public Health, Transportation) • Grow and develop local talent through apprenticeships within the council, structured work experience, internships and an in-house Graduate Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and Corporate Plan priority objectives achieved • Strong recruitment and retention rates in all areas • Improved applicant field • Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill • Awards that enhance Brent’s reputation as an employer of choice • Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation • Accreditation at <i>Excellence Level</i> of the <i>London Healthy Workplace Charter</i> • Positive outcomes from staff surveys • Apprenticeship targets of 100 job opportunities with the council achieved by 2016,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all staff complete exit forms and are offered exit interviews, and review exit interview data by department and service • Develop and implement initiatives to ensure effective employee engagement • Promote the council as an organisation that supports health and well-being in the workplace, by signing up to and gathering evidence to show that it meets the standards of the LHWC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including targets for Looked After Children • Reduced use of agency staff and consultants
<p>Leadership and Management</p> <p>To develop leadership and management effectiveness and consistency in management practice across the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, deliver and evaluate a leadership and management development programme, aligned to the Future Skills Framework, to build the capacity of our managers to lead the organisation through change and building skills for tasks such as staff development, performance management, commissioning and workforce planning • Roll out the Brent Manager Essentials programme, providing structured training for managers on performance management, financial management, council governance systems, HR systems and policies, project management • Develop and implement an internal communications strategy to highlight key workforce messages, including existing and emerging successes, the full range of benefits in working for the council, and learning and development opportunities • Develop an agreed list of key and behaviours and standards expected for managers and ensure that these are communicated and understood • Provide leadership development opportunities for Members, linked to Borough Plan priorities • Design and deliver an executive development programme for the corporate leadership team • Roll out coaching and mentoring activities to help embed learning across our management network • Create opportunities for shadowing and secondment, and for managers to network with other private and public sector organisations • Provide all new leaders and managers with appropriate induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and Corporate Plan priority objectives achieved • Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation • Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance • Corporate priority outcomes achieved • Improving positive outcomes from staff surveys • More internal staff with the skills and capacity to be recruited as senior managers from within the organisation • A workforce that is more reflective of the community at senior levels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a positive action development programme to support an increase in BAME senior managers. 	
<p>Skills Development</p> <p>To plan, deliver and evaluate learning and development programmes and activities that support all our staff in developing the skills they need to perform effectively, both now and in the future, and to develop professionally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an annual skills audit across the organisation to identify emerging needs • Create development programmes and pathways for talented staff • Develop and put into practice an induction checklist • Review and develop enhanced corporate and local induction programmes and processes for new staff • Establish clear training matrices for all roles, including requirements for essential training and Continuous Professional Development, in accordance with the Future Skills Framework • Deliver a high quality corporate offer that includes training with a customer service focus at its core • Develop and enhance the use of mobile learning and e-learning across the organisation • Provide learning and development guidance/access to buy into the corporate offer for contractors to ensure that minimum staff training requirements are met • Develop and implement robust systems for the evaluation of learning and development activities to demonstrate their impact on improving performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved • More management vacancies filled from within • Employees and managers across the organisation are able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities • Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter Brent employees or contractors • Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year • High levels of compliance with essential training • Evidence of impact of learning and development on performance • Increased usage of mobile learning and e-learning across the workforce
<p>An efficient and modern, customer-focused organisation</p> <p>To ensure that excellent services are delivered to all residents and service users through a focus on organisational effectiveness, high performance and value for money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out Brent's Performance Management Framework, ensuring that it is understood and implemented across the organisation, and that all managers, staff and teams are focused on customers and improved outcomes • Provide organisational development support for One Council and transformational change projects • Develop and provide appropriate training and support for new processes, technology and systems such as Oracle • Explore and evaluate different delivery models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved • Services are recognised by users and residents as improved • Confident and effective staff • Targeted efficiency savings achieved • New partnerships and service delivery models developed and implemented

	<p>for services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define, promote and implement flexible working to improve efficiency, ensuring that it is embedded across the organisation • Provide improved health and counselling services • Support managers in promoting well-being and managing sickness absence, particularly in areas with higher sickness levels 	<p>with improved outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attendance • Reduced sickness levels
<p>Understanding and valuing diversity</p> <p>To develop the workforce, through targeted recruitment and development, so that it is proportionately representative at all levels of the communities we serve, and so that the diverse needs of the community are understood and responded to effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out Brent's Equality Strategy, ensuring that it is effectively communicated, and that the roles and responsibilities of all Members, managers and staff are clearly understood • Increase diversity training for all staff and enhance training provisions for disability awareness, including mental health • Review and monitor pay across the council to ensure that all council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value • Embed diversity as a priority in procurement policies and practices • Develop and implement positive action programmes to improve job opportunities for BAME staff at senior levels and representation of disabled employees across the workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced inequalities in service outcomes • Equality Strategy objectives achieved • An appropriately representative workforce • Increased BAME representation at senior levels • Increased representation of disabled employees across the workforce • All council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value • More accessible services • Evidence that contractors are compliant with Brent's equality and human rights policies • Positive outcomes from staff surveys

A separate action plan will set out the actions in more detail, with responsibilities and milestones, and implementation of these actions will be monitored closely, and their impact measured and reported at regular intervals. The actions will be reviewed and amended annually as part of our planning framework, in response to emerging issues, changing context, skills audits and manager and staff feedback.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, has a role to play in ensuring that the objectives of the Workforce Strategy are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services.

Cabinet Members and Lead Member	Cabinet Members are responsible for ensuring that the Council has a workforce that is fit for purpose and offers excellent services, and therefore for approving the Workforce Strategy and reviewing its impact. The Lead Member has a key role to play in challenging officers about the implementation and impact of the strategy.
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	CMT is responsible for ensuring that the Workforce Strategy is robust, integrated into service planning and delivery, and is effectively implemented across the council. Individual members are expected to have oversight of the strategy in their areas of responsibility and ensure that information about workforce and learning and development needs are identified.
Directors and Heads of Service	Directors and Heads of Service lead by example and are responsible for ensuring that the Workforce Strategy is implemented in their service areas, that there is compliance with policies associated with the strategy, and that the strategy is monitored and reviewed.
Council-wide managers	All Brent managers are responsible for ensuring that their workforce and learning and development needs are identified and that action is taken to meet them. They are also responsible for gathering and making available information about the impact of these actions on staff well-being and performance.
Council-wide staff	All council staff are responsible for working with managers to identify their learning and development needs and adapting to agreed new ways of working.
HR Improvement Group (HRIG)	This group, comprising senior stakeholders from across the council acts as a Programme Board, responsible for driving the workforce strategy and for monitoring the its implementation across the council. It ensures that evidence on the progress of the strategy is gathered and collated for challenge by the CMT and Members.
Diversity Reference Group (DRG)	This senior strategic group acts as a Programme Board, responsible for driving the equality and human rights strategy. It has an important role to play in ensuring that the Workforce Strategy is consistent with the Council's Equality Strategy
HR Team	The HR Team, overseen by the HR Director, is responsible for the co-ordination and operational management of the workforce strategy, including its monitoring and review. The Team co-ordinates workforce information across the council and ensures that evaluative reports on progress are made available to the HR Improvement Group and CMT.
Trade Unions	The recognised trade unions within the council, are responsible for supporting their members on workforce issues, and through their involvement in the monthly Trade Union meetings with the HR Director contribute to the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the workforce strategy.

7. Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

Progress against achievement of the workforce strategy and objectives will be monitored across the council throughout the year, co-ordinated by the HR Team, with challenge from the HR Improvement Group.

An annual report evaluating progress and outcomes achieved will be reported to the Corporate Management Team and General Purposes Committee

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Strategic Priority 1: Recruitment and retention

Objective: To ensure that we recruit, retain and appropriately reward a diverse, highly skilled and motivated workforce

Outcomes

- Borough and Corporate Plan priority objectives achieved
- Strong recruitment and retention rates in all areas
- Improved applicant field
- Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill
- Awards that enhance Brent's reputation as an employer of choice
- Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation
- Positive outcomes from staff surveys
- Apprenticeship targets of 100 job opportunities with the council achieved by 2016, including targets for Looked After Children
- Reduced use of agency staff and consultants

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Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Support the implementation of effective workforce planning in all service areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Employee Services (Mildred Phillips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support needs identified within individual departments by August 2015 • Support programme agreed by August 2015 • Build priority areas in Year 2 action plan by December 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce needs identified and met in all areas • Reduced use of agency staff and consultants • Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill • Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation • Borough and Corporate Plan priority objectives achieved
Review Brent's reward and recruitment strategies to ensure that they remain competitive in the labour market and that they appropriately reflect talent, contribution and extra effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Employee Services (Mildred Phillips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms and conditions reviewed by April 2015 • Strategies to tackle hard to fill posts rolled out in full by March 2016 • Review and report on vacancy levels and recruitment and retention rates to HRIG at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong recruitment and retention rates in all areas • Reduced use of agency staff and consultants • Less hard to fill posts

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		<p>quarterly intervals commencing in June 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly reporting to Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive on agency spend and trends – on going • Monthly reports scrutinised by HR Director and Chief Finance Officer to departments on agency and consultant spend throughout 2015-16 • Detailed analysis on spend on consultancy services throughout 2015 - 16 	
<p>Develop and implement initiatives to ensure effective employee engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Employee Services (Mildred Phillips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities needed to strengthen engagement identified and agreed by May 2015 • liP accreditation process complete by June 2015 • Hold at least six employee wellbeing events annually • Healthy workplace charter Excellence level by September 2015 • Quarterly Staff Suggestion scheme throughout 2015-16 • Annual Staff Awards event Nov 2015 • Question Time with Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive bi-monthly • Bi-annual staff survey September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes from staff surveys • Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation • High attendance levels at wellbeing events

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Raise Brent's profile through articles in trade magazines/speaking at conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Communications (Robert Mansfield) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific opportunities for promotion identified at quarterly intervals Annual summary of profile raising events / articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of profile-raising articles / events, with spread across departments Improved applicant field Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill
Make submissions for awards to raise Brent's profile as an excellent place to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Operating Officer (Lorraine Langham) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for awards submissions identified with all departments at quarterly intervals Annual summary of awards submissions and successes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards submissions, spread across departments Awards that enhance Brent's reputation as an employer of choice Improved applicant field
Run targeted recruitment campaigns to ensure we recruit sufficient specialists where required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRIG and Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs analysis completed by HRIG on behalf of all departments by April 2015 Campaign(s) based on HRIG needs analysis rolled out through 2015-16, with campaign impact (including social worker campaign) reports to HRIG At least one further campaign by September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least two campaigns each year Improved applicant field Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill
Identify and implement new approaches to address the issues related to hard to fill positions (e.g. Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Public Health, Transportation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRIG and Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues identified in each area by April 2015 Approach – based on issues identified in each area – agreed by April 2015 and underway by June 2015 Agreed London-wide approach to controlling agency costs in place through 2015-16 Report on impact of proposals to address hard to fill posts in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved applicant field Reduced vacancies in posts identified as hard to fill London-wide approach to ensure consistency of approach in controlling agency spend.

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		Adults Social Care by July 2015	
Grow and develop local talent through apprenticeships within the council, structured work experience, internships and an in-house Graduate Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Manager (Sanmi Akinlabi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual round of Apprenticeship recruitment for year 2 complete by April 2015 External review of apprentice scheme undertaken by April 2015 Launch in-house graduate programme in May 2015 to commence in September 2015 Proposals for structured work experience and internships within the council rolled out through 2015-16 Revised induction and support arrangement in place for graduates by September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprenticeship targets of 100 job opportunities with the council achieved by 2016, including targets for Looked After Children Increase in opportunities for young people within the borough.
Ensure all staff complete exit forms and are offered exit interviews, and review exit interview data by department and service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heads of Service, co-ordinated by HR Manager, (Sanmi Akinlabi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit forms completed by staff in all departments and annual analysis of exit data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit forms completed by at least 90% of leavers in all departments Strong recruitment and retention rates in all areas
Promote the council as an organisation that supports health and well-being in the workplace, by signing up to and gathering evidence to show that it meets the standards of the LHWC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation at <i>Excellence Level</i> of the <i>London Healthy Workplace Charter</i> confirmed by October 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellence standard on LHWC Positive outcomes from staff surveys

Priority 2: Leadership and Management

Objective: To develop leadership and management effectiveness and consistency in management practice across the organisation

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Outcomes

- Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved
- Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation
- Confident, adaptable and knowledgeable leaders
- Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance
- Positive outcomes from staff surveys
- More internal staff with the skills and capacity to be recruited as senior managers from within the organisation
- A workforce that is more reflective of the community at senior levels

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Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Develop, deliver and evaluate a leadership and management development programme, aligned to the Future Skills Framework, to build the capacity of our managers to lead the organisation through change and building skills for tasks such as staff development, performance management, commissioning and workforce planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Director (Cara Davani) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and management Development programme agreed by June 2015, and underway by October 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 90% satisfaction rating for all development activities • Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved • Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation • Confident, adaptable and knowledgeable leaders
Roll out the <i>Brent Manager Essentials</i> programme, providing structured training for managers on performance management, financial management, council governance systems, HR systems and policies, project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Managers (Afzal Ghany and Sanmi Akinlabi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of identified participants in each department confirmed to HRIG by April 2015 • Six monthly evaluation reviews to HRIG commencing April 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High take-up rates in all departments • Minimum 90% satisfaction rating from all participants • Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance
Develop and implement an internal communications strategy to highlight key workforce messages, including existing and emerging successes, the full range of benefits in working for the council, and learning and development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Communications (Robert Mansfield) with support from HR Manager (Afzal Ghany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key messages agreed by August 2015 • Campaign plan agreed by November 2015 and reviewed and refreshed quarterly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes from staff surveys • Staff better able to do their full roles as they are better informed

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Develop an agreed list of key and behaviours and standards expected for managers and ensure that these are communicated and understood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Director (Cara Davani) and Director Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out of new behaviours by June 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive endorsement of approach from managers in all areas Existing good practice validated by liP Gold Standard accreditation Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance Positive outcomes from staff surveys
Provide leadership development opportunities for Members, linked to Borough Plan priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom Cattermole (Head of Member Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member development programme agreed by September 2015 High satisfaction levels confirmed in annual review reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 90% satisfaction rating from all participants Members have a clear understanding of the borough and council priorities, and of workforce needs
Design and deliver an executive development programme for the corporate leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Director (Cara Davani) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive development programme agreed by December 2015 Implementation review by March 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback and high satisfaction rates from participants Confident, adaptable and knowledgeable leaders Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance Positive outcomes from staff surveys
Roll out coaching and mentoring activities to help embed learning across our management network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRIG and Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Menu of coaching and mentoring opportunities agreed, with roll-out underway by September 2015 Annual reporting to HRIG September 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High and increasing participant rates Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance More internal staff with the skills and capacity to be recruited as senior managers from within the organisation A workforce that is more reflective of the community at senior levels
Create opportunities for shadowing and secondment, and for managers to network with other private and public	Principal Workforce Planning &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Menu of shadowing and secondment opportunities agreed, with roll-out underway by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High and increasing participant rates Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of

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sector organisations	Projects Officer (Raj Soni-Alagh)	September 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-monthly progress reviews 	staff performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More internal staff with the skills and capacity to be recruited as senior managers from within the organisation A workforce that is more reflective of the community at senior levels
Provide all new employees with appropriate induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal Workforce Planning & Projects Officer (Raj Soni-Alagh) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New induction programme rolled out through 2015-16, with quarterly participation and satisfaction reviews commencing April 2015 Evaluation after each programme commencing April 2015 Managers to roll out induction checklist for consistent departmental induction – on going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new leaders and managers have received induction Minimum 90% satisfaction rating from all participants Confident managers, with ability to differentiate between different levels of staff performance

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Strategic Priority 3: Skills Development

Objective: To plan, deliver and evaluate learning and development programmes and activities that support all our staff in developing the skills they need to perform effectively, both now and in the future, and to develop professionally

Outcomes

- Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved
- More management vacancies filled from within
- Employees and managers across the organisation are able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities
- Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter Brent employees or contractors
- Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year

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- High levels of compliance with essential training
- Evidence of impact of learning and development on performance
- Increased usage of mobile learning and e-learning across the workforce

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Conduct an annual skills audit across the organisation to identify emerging needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into annual Staff Survey September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills needs identified in all departments • Employees and managers across the organisation are able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities • Corporate learning and development programmes informed by skills audit
Put into practice an induction checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Workforce Planning & Projects Officer (Raj Soni-Alagh) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of effectiveness of induction checklist by November 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of compliance with essential training • Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year
Establish clear training matrices for all roles, including requirements for essential training and Continuous Professional Development, in accordance with the Future Skills Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Manager (Afzal Ghany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential training and CPD needs identified in all departments by September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees and managers across the organisation are able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities • High levels of compliance with essential training
Deliver a high quality corporate offer that demonstrates a customer service focus at its core and clear links between training and development and the Borough Plan priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Manager (Afzal Ghany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New corporate learning and development offer rolled out through 2015-16 • Annual evaluation reported to HRIG and Trade Unions September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback and high satisfaction rates from participants and managers • Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved • Evidence of impact of learning and

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development on performance Employees and managers across the organisation are able to describe learning needs and skills improvement in relation to the organisation's strategic priorities Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter Brent employees or contractors Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year High levels of compliance with essential training
Develop and enhance the use of mobile learning and e-learning across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Manager (Afzal Ghany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The corporate learning and development offer to incorporate as much eLearning as possible Annual reporting to HRIG September 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback and high satisfaction rates from participants High levels of compliance with essential training Increasing skill levels confirmed by skills audit year on year Increased usage of mobile learning and e-learning across the workforce
Provide learning and development guidance/access to buy into the corporate offer for contractors to ensure that minimum staff training requirements are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Manager (Afzal Ghany) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance and buy-in proposals on offer by September 2015 6-monthly take-up analysis Annual review commencing September 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High take-up by contractors Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter Brent employees or contractors High levels of compliance with essential training
Develop and implement robust systems for the evaluation of learning and development activities to demonstrate their impact on improving performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review of L&D Evaluation Framework implementation April 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of impact of learning and development on performance Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved Brent residents experience excellent services whether they encounter

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		Brent employees or contractors
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Strategic Priority 4: An efficient and modern, customer-focused organisation

Objective: To ensure that excellent services are delivered to all residents and service users through a focus on organisational effectiveness, high performance and value for money

Outcomes

- Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved
- Services are recognised by users and residents as improved
- Confident and effective staff
- Targeted efficiency savings achieved
- New partnerships and service delivery models developed and implemented with improved outcomes
- Improved attendance
- Reduced sickness levels

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Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Roll-out Brent's Performance Management Framework, ensuring that it is understood and implemented across the organisation, and that all managers, staff and teams are focused on customers and improved outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Operating Officer (Lorraine Langham) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-month review of implementation of Performance Management Framework in all areas September 2015 • Annual review of effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough and corporate priority outcomes achieved • Services are recognised by users and residents as improved
Provide organisational development support for One Council and transformational change projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Operating Officer (Lorraine Langham) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Council programme board to consider organisational development support arrangements – on going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive evaluations from One Council project progress reports • Targeted efficiency savings achieved • New partnerships and service delivery models developed and implemented with improved outcomes
Develop and provide appropriate training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and support needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback and high

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and support for new processes, technology and systems such as Oracle	Director Strategic Commissioning (Peter Gadston) with support from HR Manager (Afzal Ghany)	identified by December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> satisfaction rates from participants Targeted efficiency savings achieved Confident and effective staff
Explore and evaluate different delivery models for services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT (individually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructuring arrangements April 2015 – March 2016 incorporating consideration of alternative models of working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New partnerships and service delivery models developed and implemented with improved outcomes Targeted efficiency savings achieved Restructurings undertaken and reconfigurations in order to develop new ways of working Greater self sufficiency from residents and services users
Define, promote and implement flexible working to improve efficiency, ensuring that it is embedded across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible working survey results April 2015 Further drive on following out flexible working options across the council by March 2016 Annual analysis of take-up and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive outcomes from staff surveys Targeted efficiency savings achieved Improved attendance Reduced sickness levels
Provide improved health and counselling services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Employee Services (Mildred Phillips) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop in house occupational health service May 2015 New offer rolled out through 2015-16, with annual evaluation reports to HRIG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellence standard on LHWC Improved attendance Reduced sickness levels
Support managers in promoting well-being and managing sickness absence, particularly in areas with higher sickness levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Managers (, Afzal Ghany and Sanmi Akinlabi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas with higher sickness levels identified by April 2015 Support provided where needed in areas identified with higher sickness levels, with quarterly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attendance and productively Reduced sickness levels

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of provision and impact Quarterly monitoring reports on attendance and absence levels in all departments Annual reporting to HRIG September 2015 	
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Strategic Priority 5: Understanding and valuing diversity

Objective: To develop the workforce, through targeted recruitment and development, so that it is proportionately representative at all levels of the communities we serve, and so that the diverse needs of the community are understood and responded to effectively

Outcomes

- Reduced inequalities in service outcomes
- Equality Strategy objectives achieved
- An appropriately representative workforce
- Increased BAME representation at senior levels
- Increased representation of disabled employees across the workforce
- All council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value
- More accessible services
- Evidence that contractors are compliant with Brent's equality and human rights policies
- Positive outcomes from staff surveys

Actions	Lead	Milestones	Outcomes
Roll out Brent's Equality Strategy, ensuring that it is effectively communicated, and that the roles and responsibilities of all Members, managers and staff are clearly understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Strategy and Action Plan launched through 2015-16, with reviews to DRG every six months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Strategy objectives achieved Reduced inequalities in service outcomes An appropriately representative workforce Increased BAME representation at senior levels Increased representation of disabled

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			employees across the workforce
Increase diversity training for all staff and enhance training provisions for disability awareness, including mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened diversity and disability training rolled out through 2015-16, with reviews to DRG every six months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback and high satisfaction rates from participants Positive outcomes from staff surveys
Review and monitor pay across the council to ensure that all council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Employee Services (Mildred Philips) and Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal Pay Audit conducted in April 2015 Recommendations rolled out by December 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All council employees receive equal pay for work of equal value
Embed diversity as a priority in procurement policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Equality (Sarah Kaiser) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised equality requirements incorporated into all procurement processes from April 2015 Outcomes assessment by October 2015, with 6-monthly subsequent updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that contractors are compliant with Brent's equality and human rights policies More accessible services

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General Purposes Committee
25 February 2015

**Report from the Director of
Human Resources**

For Action

Wards affected:
ALL

**Local Government Pension Scheme
Employer Pensions Discretions Policy**

1.0 Summary

This report details the areas of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2014 relating to Employer Discretions where the council is required to formulate, publish and keep a policy statement under review.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to:

- a) approve the Employer Pension Discretions Policy and
- b) authorise the HR Director in consultation with the Chief Executive and then in consultation with the relevant trade unions to make such other changes as may be necessary from time to time to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose'.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The LGPS Regulations 2013 para 60 require all scheme employers to publish and keep under review a written policy statement on how they will apply their discretionary powers in relation to certain provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

3.2 The specific areas where the council is required to formulate, publish and keep a policy statement under review are as follows:

- a) Augmentation of membership
- b) Awarding additional pension
- c) Flexible retirement
- d) Allowing early payment of benefits

Meeting
Date

Version no.
Date

- e) Waiving actuarial reduction for early retirement

3.3 **Augmentation of membership**

This provision in the 2008 Scheme enabled an employer to award up to 10 years of additional pension scheme membership to a scheme member. Our current policy is that we do not make use of this provision generally, but that in exceptional cases it may be considered. This provision will be removed from the 2014 scheme and is mentioned in this report for information only. We have not used this provision since 2002.

3.4 **Awarding additional pension**

This provision currently enables an employer to award an additional pension of up to £5,000 per annum to a scheme member. Under the new scheme, this amount will be increased to £6,500 per annum and there will be index-linked increases to this figure each year. The cost of awarding additional pension would be substantial and our current policy is that we will not make use of this provision generally but that in exceptional cases it may be considered.

It is recommended that the policy be amended to state that the award of additional pension for staff must be supported by a business case. That awarding additional pension will be determined by the HR Director in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

3.5 **Flexible retirement**

This provision enables an employer to grant permission for an employee who is aged 55 or over to receive payment of the pension benefits they have built up and continue working for the Council with less pay.

Our current policy is to consider all requests for flexible retirement from staff who are aged 55 or over provided that the employee has a permanent reduction in salary of at least 40%.

It is recommended that the policy retains the option for staff requests for flexible retirement subject to the approval of the HR Director in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

3.6 **Early payment of pension**

Under the 2008 scheme, an employer has the discretion to allow an employee to retire voluntarily between the ages of 55-59 and receive immediate payment of their pension benefits. From the age of 60, the employer's permission is not required. The pension benefits payable would be subject to a reduction to allow for early payment however in exceptional circumstances when it is in the operational interests of the council or where there are other compelling compassionate grounds the reduction could be waived. Waiving of the reduction will require the council to make a payment to the pension fund to make up the shortfall.

Our current policy is that we will usually consider employees' requests to retire before the age of 60 but that we will not waive the actuarial reductions. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where there are compassionate grounds or reasons not covered by other regulations and policies which merit the waiving of the

reductions which can be approved by the HR Director in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

Under the new scheme, employees aged between 55 and 59 will no longer need their employer's permission to retire and receive immediate payment of their pension benefits. However, the pension benefits will be subject to an actuarial reduction to allow for early payment. It is proposed that the council only waives actuarial reductions for staff aged between 55-59 who choose to retire early, however this may be considered where there are exceptional and compelling compassionate grounds.

3.7 Discretion to 'switch on' the 85 year rule for 55 to 60 year olds

On 10 March 2014, the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 came into force introducing various other discretions that the council could exercise in relation to pension entitlement. Due to the additional cost that would be involved in the discretions, it is recommended that the policy should state that, with one exception, no discretions will be exercised by the Council. The exception relates to entitlement to an enhanced pension under the '85 Year Rule' for employees aged between 55 and 60. There is no longer an automatic entitlement for employees in this aged group for unreduced pension for employees whose length plus age of service is 85 or more. It is proposed that in exceptional circumstances, where this is in the interests of the Council, that the Council will pay the additional cost of an unreduced pension.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 When the council exercise these discretions, they may incur costs that are not within the original budget for the year. The council will consider the financial implications in each instance and will only agree to the discretion where it is in the best financial interests of the Council when assessed over the medium term.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The new policy statement is underpinned by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2014.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 The policy and procedure is applicable to all staff and provides a consistent approach to Employer Discretions across the council. The Employer Pensions Discretions policy statement will be regularly monitored to ensure it is implemented fairly across the council.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

7.1 Staffing implications are covered in the body of the report.

Background Papers

Employer Discretion policy statement
LGPS regulations (<http://www.lgpsregs.org/index.php/guides/pdfarchive>)

Contact Officer

Cara Davani
HR Director

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HR Policy

Local Government Pension Scheme
Draft Employer Pension Discretions Policy
February 2015



Human Resources

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy outlines Brent Council's position in relation to the exercise of its discretionary powers under the regulations of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2014. It explains whether and in what circumstances the Council will exercise any of its discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 and to set out the approval process for decision making. All local government employers are required to review and update their policy to take account of the changes introduced as part of the LGPS 2014.
- 1.2 This policy covers all council employees who are members of the Local Government Pensions Scheme. However, in the case of school based employees the relevant governing body is responsible for authorising any discretions and meeting any costs in accordance with this policy.

2. LEGAL AND BUSINESS CONTEXT

- 2.1 There are a number of other discretions which Scheme employers may exercise under the LGPS Regulations 2013 (see: <http://www.lgpsregs.org/index.php/guides/pdfarchive>).

3. POLICY REMIT AND DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The specific areas where employers will be required to formulate, publish and keep under review, statements of Policy are as follows:
 1. Augmentation of membership
 2. Awarding additional pension
 3. Flexible retirement
 4. Allowing early payment of benefits
 5. Waiving actuarial reduction for early retirement
 6. Transfer of previous service
- 3.2 The specific LGPS Regulations and the proposed regulations and policy statements are detailed below.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 **Regulation 31 - whether to grant extra annual pension of up to 10 years to an active Scheme member or within 6 months of leaving to a member whose employment was terminated on the grounds of redundancy or business efficiency.**

Brent Council will not increase of Pension during employment or upon leaving for scheme members.

- 4.2 **Regulations 16(2)(e) and 16(4)d) - whether, where an active Scheme member wishes to purchase extra annual pension of up to £6,500* (figure at 1 April 2014) by making Additional Pension Contributions (APCs), the employer can choose to (voluntarily) contribute towards the cost of purchasing that extra pension via a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC).**

*The figure of £6,500 will be increased each April under the Pension (Increase) Act 1971 (as if it were a pension with a PI date of 1 April 2013.)

Brent will not establish a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution scheme for any of its employees unless there is a clear financial or operational advantage to be gained by Brent by doing so.

4.3 Regulation 30(6) - whether to permit flexible retirement for staff aged 55 or over who, with the agreement of the employer, reduce their working hours or grade and, if so, as part of the agreement to permit flexible retirement:

A request for flexible retirement will be accepted only with the consent of the HR Director, Operational Director, Chief Finance Officer and only if there is a clear financial or operational advantage for Brent in so doing. Decisions regarding early payment of benefits are, within the above policy, delegated to officers.

Waiving of actuarial reductions and the application of 85 year rule protections in such cases will be considered only where there is a clear financial or operational advantage in doing so.

4.4 Regulation 30(5) - whether, to apply the 85 year rule protections to members who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60, under [paragraph 1(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014].

Waiving of actuarial reductions and the application of 85 year rule protections will be considered only where there is a clear financial or operational advantage to Brent in doing so.

4.5 Regulation 30(8) - whether to waive any actuarial reductions that would otherwise apply under Regulation 30(5) and Regulation 30(6):

Waiving of actuarial reductions and the application of 85 year rule protections will be considered only where there is a clear financial or operational advantage in so doing.

A request for early unreduced payment of benefits on compassionate grounds (i.e. waiving of percentage reduction in respect of early retirement on compassionate grounds), will normally be considered only where the former member is prevented from full-time working due to the need to provide long-term care for a dependant but other exceptions may apply. All requests for waiving actuarial reduction will require approval from the Chief Finance Officer and the HR Director.

4.6 Transfer of Service into the LGPS (Regulation 100)

Members must request to transfer their pensions benefits from previous employments within 12 months of joining Brent council. The Head of Employee Services is authorised to extend the 12 month time limit for allowing active members to transfer benefits from previous pensionable employment into the Brent Pension Fund where it is determined that maladministration has occurred as a result of affected employees not having been given any or sufficient details about the pension. No other exceptions apply.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees / Deferred Scheme Members

- 5.1 Employees must make requests under this policy in writing to their Strategic Director who will liaise with HR over the approval process.

Human Resources / Finance

- 5.2 The HR Director and Chief Finance Officer will consider each request on an individual basis. There will be no automatic consent. Where a request is not approved, reasons for the rejection will be issued to the applicant in writing.

Trade unions

- 5.3 The role of the trades unions is to represent the views and interests of their members on this policy and associated procedures, as a need arises, and to advise and represent individual members as appropriate.

6. APPLICATIONS ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS

- 6.1 Compassionate grounds can cover a variety of situations and a written application outlining the case should be submitted to the HR Director and Chief Finance Officer. All applications on compassionate ground must include supporting documentation as evidence of the circumstance. Brent reserves the right to seek additional information or evidence should it feel necessary. Any application for actuarial reductions in benefits could be waived based on the individual's circumstances.


7. MONITORING

- 7.1 The applications of the 'discretions' contained in this policy will be reported to CMT annually.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 8.1 Any clarification in respect of the application of this policy should be sought from Human Resources.

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 <p>Brent</p>	<p align="center">General Purposes Committee 25 February 2015</p> <p align="center">Report from the Director of Human Resources</p>
<p>For Action/Information Wards affected: ALL</p>	
<p>HR Pandemic Policy</p>	

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides details of the proposed new Pandemic Policy. When developing the new policy, the opportunity has been taken to clarify its remit and give clearer guidance to staff on how HR policies may be affected during a pandemic.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to approve the new Pandemic Policy.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The council's current Pandemic Policy is overly lengthy and no longer fit for purpose. It does not make clear that the HR policy's remit is to focus on internal staff management and business continuity in the event of a pandemic, nor does it acknowledge or explain the wider context within which the HR policy operates.

3.2 The new policy briefly outlines the wider context of response structures and chains of command which would be established in the event of a pandemic. The Emergency Planning team and the Director of Public Health were consulted during the drafting of this policy and support the various changes which are being proposed.

3.3 It is made clear that during a pandemic, employees may be asked to take on tasks which go beyond their normal roles and responsibilities in order to ensure critical services are maintained. Staff may also be asked to undertake temporary transfers to other roles, and are expected to respond flexibly to these requests where possible. These are no longer referred to as 'secondments', in order to remove any confusion about the status of an employee who takes on additional duties during a pandemic.

- 3.4 The importance of planning for a loss of up to 50% of staff via departmental- or service-level business continuity plans is emphasised in the new policy. Managers are made aware that the Emergency Planning team should be contacted if they have any queries related to completing a business continuity plan.
- 3.5 The new policy states that during a pandemic, normal self-certification rules may not apply. With approval from HR and in line with local and national guidance, self-certification of a pandemic illness may be extended to up to 14 days. This is in recognition of the fact that health services may be too stretched to provide doctor's notes during a pandemic, and is supported by the Director of Public Health.
- 3.6 The new policy confirms that the usual flexible working limits may also be relaxed to allow staff to work up to five days a week from home. This is subject to HR advice, managerial approval and local and national guidelines on minimising spread of infection.
- 3.7 The policy also acknowledges that in the event of a pandemic staff may require additional emotional support or experience higher than usual levels of stress and/or anxiety. It directs managers to the council's Stress Policy and encourages staff to make use of the council's telephone-based Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if support is required.
- 3.8 HR Improvement Group and Trade Union representatives were consulted on the policy, and CMT have recommended the policy be approved.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 A pandemic is an extreme event which could cause a loss of staffing levels of up to 50% and affect the delivery of critical services. The measures outlined in this policy are designed to mitigate the effects of a pandemic where possible, but the financial implications of doing so are not possible to predict due to the unique nature of a pandemic.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 During a pandemic, all local and national guidelines from the NHS, Public Health England and the LLACC would be followed in order to ensure compliance with legal and legislative requirements.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 This policy is applicable to all staff and provides a consistent approach to managing staffing and business continuity needs during a pandemic. With the exception of any pandemic-specific implications which cannot be predicted, no one group of staff with protected characteristics should be disproportionately affected by this policy.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 Staff numbers may be reduced by up to 50% during pandemic. Departments are asked to plan for this eventuality in their business continuity plans.

- 7.2 Staff may be expected to work more flexibly during a pandemic to minimise the spread of infection. This could include working from home instead of in their usual place of work or altering their hours to better suit their needs. HR will advise on best practice in the event of any pandemic.

Background Papers

Brent Pandemic Framework

Contact Officers

Cara Davani
HR Director

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HR Policy

Draft Pandemic Policy
January 2015



Human Resources

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the council's provisions and expectations on the part of its employees and management in the event of a pandemic occurring. Every effort will be made to maintain the services we provide, especially those that are statutory and critical to the well-being of the community. Services will be tailored to the level of pandemic alert and requirements set out in business continuity plans.

This policy is primarily concerned with the maintenance of essential services, continuity of staffing and the management of staff who are affected by a pandemic. It is one of a wider suite of documents which comprise the borough's overarching response to emergency scenarios, and should be read in conjunction with your service unit or department's business continuity plan.

Our external approach to a pandemic (e.g. communicating with and safeguarding members of the public) is not covered in this policy. For those who wish to read more about the external process, further information is available in the Brent Pandemic Framework.

2. PREPARATION AND RESPONSE

2.1 Workforce infection prevention

The council ensures that staff whose day to day roles expose them to risk of infection are protected on an ongoing basis. The council's procedures for infection control are outlined in the Infection Control arrangements, which are available on the intranet. These arrangements were reviewed in 2015 and provide guidance to managers on how to prevent contamination and subsequent spread of infection, as well as on how to conduct effective risk assessments. These arrangements clarify that infection control arrangements and risk assessments may be subject to revision during a pandemic to reflect current health advice and guidance.

2.2 Response structures

In the event of a pandemic, the council will set up a 'Gold Group', comprised of CMT members. This group, advised by the Emergency Planning team, will be responsible for setting the council's strategy on service maintenance and staffing continuity. This strategy will then be implemented by the 'Departmental/Service-level recovery group' which works to develop appropriate actions based on the Gold Group's strategy across the organisation. These actions will work in conjunction with departmental or service level business continuity plans and the HR Pandemic Policy.

3. DURING A PANDEMIC

The main business continuity issues the council will need to prepare for during a pandemic are:

- Maintaining critical services
- Managing the workforce
- Communicating with employees and customers

3.1 Maintaining critical services

The council's Emergency Planning team coordinates business continuity planning across the council. Individual departments are responsible for determining how they will manage staff and services when faced with a loss of staff. Business continuity plans detail the responsibilities, staffing arrangements and priorities of each service unit/department in the event of emergency situations. In the case of a pandemic, business continuity plans are implemented following certain triggers from health bodies, and these will be communicated to staff via the corporate communication channels.

Service units are likely to be affected by an increase in sickness absence and other absences due to e.g. transport problems, caring responsibilities or family bereavement. Services should plan for the possibility that at the peak of a pandemic 50% of employees could be off work at the same time. This eventuality should be acknowledged and addressed in each department's business continuity plan(s).

As part of contingency planning on a departmental level, senior managers can, when appropriate, ask staff who retire or leave the service whether they would be potentially be available to assist during a pandemic.

Senior managers of front line services should also map the range of services commissioned by non-council providers and include these in their planning. Departments are required to review and re-submit their business continuity plans every two years. Further details and guidance is available from the council's Emergency Planning team and the intranet.

3.2 Managing staff

During a pandemic all levels of staff are likely to be equally affected. Employees will therefore need to be aware that they may be called upon to exercise authority in areas beyond their normal job roles and responsibilities. The contribution of all employees during the pandemic period will be essential to the provision of critical services.

The council will expect employees to be flexible to ensure that critical services can be maintained. This may include undertaking temporary transfers to complete work outside of an employee's normal job description. Where employees are required to undertake duties beyond their normal role, managers should ensure they give employees a clear explanation of their requirements in the new role. Temporary transfers may apply across sections/departments, particularly where employees are not able to work in their own department due to e.g. suspended service. Employees should be encouraged to see any temporary transfer as a way of developing new skills for future career enhancement.

Managers may also request volunteers from existing employees who are willing to work additional hours to cover increased absence levels in critical service areas. All additional volunteering is subject to the Working Time Regulations. Volunteers who have specialist skills and knowledge may also be requested to work outside their normal areas of work to deal with emergencies and continuing situations during the pandemic. Other volunteers may be trained to deal with general tasks such as administration, record keeping and telephone work.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to use agency staff to cover some absences, although the availability of such staff will likely be affected in the same way as the council's own employees. A pandemic scenario would **not negate** the need for any agency staff (or existing employees covering other roles internally) to have the relevant DBS checks for roles which would ordinarily require one.

3.3 Communicating with employees

Employees are likely to be very concerned about the potential risks during a pandemic. The council's Communication team will be responsible for the dissemination of key messages before, during and in the wake of any pandemic. They will work in conjunction with the London Local Authority Coordination Centre (LLACC) and Public Health, Emergency Planning and HR to ensure all staff are receiving accurate and relevant information. They will issue up-to-date information on the intranet or other appropriate channels to employees and managers, ensuring these are consistent with national and local guidelines on:

- The key facts about the pandemic before, during and after, how it spreads, risks of infection and infection control methods, the role of anti-virals and vaccines, what additional precautions can be taken.
- Medical advice including symptoms.
- Advice on attending work, the status of services and the advice of the council's Emergency Planning team, Health and Safety team, Public Health and the LLACC at the time.
- HR advice on absence management and reporting.
- HR advice to employees where they or a dependent who needs care have been affected by a pandemic.

Departments must ensure that local arrangements are in place to facilitate good communication during a pandemic, e.g. ensuring employees who do not have access to the intranet receive corporate communication and where normal communication lines have been affected by disruption to IT, ensuring that staff receive the information by other means.

4. HR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

During a pandemic, the priority is to avoid the spread of disease/infection. The council's flexible working arrangements will be vital in limiting the spread of infection amongst staff and members of the public. Given the extreme nature of a pandemic, normal HR policies and procedures may need to be suspended on the advice of the HR Director.

4.1 Flexible Working

During a pandemic, the normal remote working limits of two days per week as specified in the Flexible Working Policy will not apply. Employees may, if their role allows and with managerial consent, work up to five full days from home. This is subject to national and local guidance around minimising infection and spread and will be advised on by HR once a pandemic has been predicted or declared. As with all homeworking, employees must be contactable during the working day and arrangements put in place to ensure urgent issues are dealt with appropriately.

Flexible working hours may also be necessary in order to ensure that business need is met whilst minimising risk to employees. For example, if staff with caring needs require a temporary change to their working hours this should be considered by managers. Likewise employees who wish to travel outside of the rush hour or avoid public transport should be accommodated where possible if this in line with current local and national health guidelines.

Staff (including agency staff or casual workers) must be encouraged to take precautionary measures where possible. For example, in the case of pandemic flu employees must not attend work if they believe they are starting with the symptoms of flu (or if they have the

virus) as this will increase the risk of infection for other employees and service users. In this situation, employees who feel well enough to work should be asked to work from home where possible, and those who do not will take sickness absence which should be recorded in the normal way.

4.2 Sickness absence and triggers

Absences for pandemic infections/diseases will be treated as sick leave and paid in line with the council's occupational sick pay policy. Managers and employees should continue to record absence on Oracle in the normal way.

In accordance with normal absence procedures employees would be required to complete a self-certification form on return to work for the first 7 days and provide a medical certificate for all absences in excess of 7 days. In the event that medical services are stretched by a pandemic and are not able to issue medical certificates, employees may self-certify up to 14 days of sickness absence if they have been affected by the pandemic disease or virus. HR via the Communications team will advise when self-certification up to 14 days is permissible.

Standard sickness absence triggers (long- and short-term) will be observed during a pandemic, although HR will take into account the circumstances surrounding the pandemic during the monitoring process.

4.3 Other absence

Employees may be absent from work in a pandemic situation for reasons other than their own illness. For example, absences may occur where an employee is the primary carer of children and/or adults who have contracted a pandemic illness. Employees may also be absent from work owing to school closures and the breakdown of care arrangements for adults due to the pandemic. In these or similar circumstances, employees should take annual leave or flexi time as available to them. In exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave can be taken as determined on a case by case basis. Employees are expected to provide as much notice as possible of the need to take leave.

Employees will need to seek their manager's permission to take annual leave, flexi time or unpaid leave for these occasions. These requests should be prioritised over requests for leave for leisure purposes.

Other planned absences such as annual leave for leisure purposes, special leave, flexi time or leave for public duties may need to be cancelled or re-arranged during a pandemic to ensure sufficient cover to maintain critical services. However, this should only occur where other alternatives have been explored, e.g. temporary transfer of other employees, agency staff and volunteers.

Special leave requests for bereavement situations and public duties which must be provided by law will take priority over non-critical flexi time or annual leave. Where leave is cancelled for service reasons and employees have incurred unavoidable costs, the council may, in exceptional circumstances, reimburse any expenditure (depending on the circumstances) if they are not otherwise recoverable through insurance.

In a prolonged pandemic period leave should not be automatically cancelled and new requests may need to be considered to balance the need for work and rest. Depending on the circumstances of a given pandemic, the council may consider allowing more leave than normal to be carried forward into the next leave year subject to all employees being required

to take the statutory annual leave of 20 days (and leave on bank holidays). Any leave requests during the pandemic must have advance approval of the manager.

4.4 Reporting absence

During a pandemic, all employees are required to notify their place of work if they are absent for any reason. This includes (but is not limited to) absence caused by their own illness or potential infection, that of dependents, or caring duties arising as a result of e.g. school closures. Employees will need to advise their place of work every 7 days on the progress of their health/care arrangements etc. and the employee's likely date of return to work.

At the time of any pandemic it is likely that the council may have a central reporting system in place for all council employees. Further details will be given in its communication to employees.

4.5 Refusal to attend work or perform duties

It is expected that employees will continue to attend, perform their duties and be flexible to ensure that services continue to be provided. If difficulties arise with refusal to attend for work or refusal to carry out certain duties, managers should find out what the concerns are, consider what, if anything, can be reasonably addressed and encourage the employee to work.

If despite addressing the issues, the employee still refuses to attend or perform their full duties then this may be considered unauthorised absence or refusal to perform the full duties of their job which may be a disciplinary issue. In this scenario, advice should be sought from HR immediately to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach is taken.

4.6 Other HR functions

Other non-statutory HR functions may be affected during a pandemic. Information will be disseminated as appropriate via the council's corporate communication channels. Examples of potentially affected areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

Appraisals: It may be impractical to undertake appraisals during a pandemic and the dates for appraisal interviews and mid year reviews may therefore be postponed until after the pandemic has passed.

Grievances, Capability and Disciplinary: The operation of key HR policies and associated procedures may be impractical at the height of a pandemic. In the case of discipline, suspension may be used as a precautionary measure pending return to normal conditions. Any investigations and hearings may need to be postponed until the pandemic has passed.

5. SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES

It is anticipated that it will take considerable time for services to return to normal after a pandemic. Once the pandemic is officially over, those employees who have been working beyond contracted hours should be given compensatory leave at the earliest possible opportunity. Any annual leave requests will also need to be reviewed.

Any disciplinary, capability and grievance issues will be followed up taking account of the circumstances that prevailed during the pandemic and learning from any adverse events.

During and after a pandemic, employees may experience higher levels of stress or emotional anxiety. Throughout a pandemic, managers should encourage staff to contact the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which offers telephone-based counselling and other health related services. Managers should also refer to the council's Stress Policy to ensure they are adequately equipped to deal with potentially increased incidences of stress amongst their staff.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information in respect of this policy should be sought from Human Resources.

DR