



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE TEACHERS' JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE Tuesday 7 July 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor , Councillor and Councillors Aden, Bradley, Harrison, Kelcher, Tatler, Mr H Brown, Mrs L Gouldbourne, Mr S Gorsia, Mr H Roberts, Ms J Roberts and Mr G Williams

Apologies for absence were received from: Mr C Beschi and Ms J Cooper

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Beschi and Ms Cooper.

2. **Election of Vice Chair**

The committee agreed that the council side would take the chair for 2015/16 and that Lesley Gouldbourne would be Vice Chair for the Teachers' Panel.

3. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

Clarification was sought on the position on members of the committee involved in teaching having to declare personal or prejudicial interests.

Councillor Tatler declared an interest as a teacher at The Crest Academies.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 March 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. **Matters arising**

None.

6. **Items raised by the Teachers' Panel**

Hank Roberts, on behalf of The Teachers' Panel welcomed the opportunity to meet with members and exchange views. He also put the view that it was the role of councils to question central government policy when appropriate and not to take blame for issues for which the council was not at fault. The Teachers' Panel raised the following concerns.

(i) *Health and Safety in Free Schools, and in particular, lessons to be learnt relating to Michaela Free School situation*

Hank Roberts referred to Michaela Free School in Wembley Park which had been found to have Health and Safety issues and over which the council had usefully intervened. He questioned whether the council had any residual role regarding health and safety such as a legal responsibility and, if so, to what extent.

The Strategic Director, Children and Young People, Gail Tolley confirmed that the advice regionally and nationally was that responsibility lay with the school's Trust and the Department of Education. The local authority did not have any statutory responsibility or obligation for school premises. The LA would raise concerns and seek to influence but not intervene. The Director reminded the Teachers' Panel that funding for Free Schools had been passed from local authorities to the schools however the council would pass on concerns in the spirit of partnership.

The Teachers' Panel felt that it would be helpful if the position could be clarified in writing.

(ii) *The council's attitude and possible actions regarding new academies and free schools*

The Teachers' Panel referred to the Kilburn Grange School due to be opened in 2015 and asked to receive information on the number of places that would be allocated for Brent students. They also heard that Gateway School was not proceeding and that while Gladstone School had submitted plans to the DFE and the council's planning department, there was discussion of the number of forms of entry. The earliest it would open would be September 2016 possibly on a temporary site.

The Teachers' Panel highlighted the action being taken around the country against the government policies on Free Schools and Academies and that parents were becoming increasingly aware that the justification for the introduction of the policies was not related to increasing parental choice. They called on the council to do the minimum required to comply with legislation but to join teachers' unions in pointing out the shortcomings of the policy and make parents aware of the council's position. The Chair asked it to be recorded that discussion on this was taking place within the Labour Group.

(iii) *Michaela Free School: allocation of pupil places for September 2015*

The Teachers' Panel made enquiries of the number of places at Michaela School in Wembley Park and heard that there had been 321 applications for 120 places of 4FE.

(iv) *Pay progression in maintained schools*

The Teachers' Panel raised the issue of pay progression in maintained schools, stating that pay increases were sometimes held back by performance management and the end of automatic progression. They felt that head teachers should be informed that the approach was not conducive for retention and that pay progression should be an entitlement for good teachers.

Cate Duffy (interim Operational Director, Early Years) advised that a model pay policy had been put before schools for school governing bodies to adopt but was not enforceable.

The committee heard that in some cases performance management targets were inconsistent and unachievable and that there was a need for an overview of how it was conducted in Brent, citing examples of good practice provided and where improvements could be made. The Teachers' Panel felt that the current practice was a contributory factor in the decline in the number of experienced practitioners joining the teaching profession. They also suggested that there was a disproportionate adverse impact on the progression of particular sections of the teaching staff such as women, older women and black staff and questioned whether it was possible to collect data as evidence. Cate Duffy undertook to ask HR colleagues if the authority held any data on the protected characteristics of teachers joining and leaving schools in Brent.

The committee heard that often new teachers were not aware of the requirements for performance related pay target and felt there should be more training to ensure that targets were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable realistic and time bound). The Teachers' Panel added that new teachers were overwhelmed, reluctant to challenge and increasingly fearful of the schools losing funding. The chair drew attention to evidence that indicated that performance related pay had little impact on student performance.

In response to question on the position regarding local authority representation on Academy governing bodies, the Strategic Director stated the council had changed its appointment process however whether to appoint was a decision for schools' Trusts.

(v) *Asbestos policy and actions*

The Teachers' Panel drew attention to the outcome of recent case of a local teacher who had successfully claimed compensation from the council for having contracted mesothelioma after having been exposed to asbestos in a local school. The Chair, in querying the responsibility for the asbestos policy in Brent and how widespread the problem was thought to be, was advised that policy was dealt with by the council's health and safety committee and that detailed information on the extent of the problem was held by HR. The Teachers' Side placed responsibility on central government for not making school asbestos management mandatory.

(vi) *Strengthening the partnership criteria*

The Teachers' Panel circulated a partnership document sent to schools in Brent which they welcomed and highlighted one particular aspect strengthened namely item 5: 'good employment practice advising that in at least one Free School, staff were discouraged from joining teaching unions. They hoped the council would make clear at the outset that union recognition was the preferred option.

Cate Duffy contributed that there was a need for clarity on where non union membership was due to teacher choice or school policy. She asked the Teachers' Panel for their preferred wording so discussion could take place on how to proceed.

(vii) *Human Resources review*

The Teachers' Panel referred to departure of the former Director of HR, Cara Davani, and the review of HR referred to by the Leader of the Council. They felt that in the past, the Teachers' Panel had worked well with HR staff however the staffing levels had been reduced. They questioned who would be involved in the review and were advised that the Leaders' office would be asked to liaise.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

Prevent Strategy

The Teachers' Panel drew attention to the schools' obligations under central government's PREVENT legislation and questioned the advice being given to schools and how it would be delivered.

Gail Tolley reminded the committee that PREVENT duty guidance came into force on 1 July 2015 and that termly meetings with head teachers took place. She had also met with the PREVENT officer and attended a workshop. It had been clearly indicated to schools that PREVENT should be part of safeguarding policies and policies would need to be updated.

The Teachers' Panel suggested that where possible, it would be preferable to issue joint guidance for schools in a similar manner as for DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) guidance. The committee heard the view that in some cases the PREVENT strategy training for teaching staff was being rushed and that a punitive approach was being adopted towards students. The Teachers' Panel also questioned the extent to which HR advice available to Free Schools and Academies had been taken up.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The committee agreed that arrangements should be made for the next meeting to take place in November 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

COUNCILLOR M BRADLEY
Chair