



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

### MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Wednesday 12 February 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Butt (Chair), Councillor and Councillors Hirani, Hopkins, Kansagra, McLennan, J Moher and Pavey

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors R Moher, Brown and Lorber

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

None declared.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 January 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

None.

4. **Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies**

None.

5. **Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statements**

Cara Davani (HR Director) introduced the report to the committee and explained that the Localism Act 2011 required local authorities in England and Wales to publish a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. The Statement had to be approved by 31 March and was scheduled to be considered by Full Council at its meeting on 3 March 2014.

Cara Davani drew members' attention to the Pay Policy Statement attached at appendix 1 to the report and explained that it outlined Brent's policy on pay and benefits for all employees, excluding Schools. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Statement included details of the remuneration of chief officers and lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of chief officers and all other employees. The Statement reflected current practice and there were no proposals to make any policy changes. Several key updates to the Statement were highlighted to the committee, including the amendment of the Pay Multiple to account for the employment of Brent's Interim Chief Executive; the

implementation of the London Living Wage; and, the transfer of Public Health staff to the Council. The Pay Policy Statement also referred to the impending new HR Strategy for 2014-17 which was currently in the final stages of development.

With reference to the recommendations set out in the report, Andrew Potts (Senior Employment Lawyer) advised that the committee was being asked to note the attached Pay Policy Statement.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee raised several queries. A member noted that an employee's annual pay progression was subject to satisfactory performance and queried how this was defined. It was similarly queried what constituted the minimum period referred to in relation to the re-employment of a former employee by the council and, the exceptional circumstances under which a temporary member of staff might be permitted to cover a permanent role. The committee agreed that the Pay Policy Statement should be amended to clarify these points, with reference made to the relevant policies.

In response, Cara Davani advised that the Pay Policy would be amended as suggested and explained that the appraisal process allowed the council to define satisfactory performance. With regard to the re-employment of a former employee, the minimum period was strictly set out in the Managing Change Policy. It was further explained that a lot of work had been undertaken to reduce the number of temporary staff employed by the council and a temporary employee would only be required to cover a permanent role where this was absolutely necessary; this could include interim cover for a senior post during a period of recruitment.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Pay Policy Statement, as attached at appendix 1 to the report, be amended to clarify the points raised by the committee;
- (ii) that the amended Pay Policy Statement be noted as an accurate and factual representation of the council's pay arrangements for 2014/15;
- (iii) that it be noted that the Pay Policy Statement would be submitted for approval to Full Council on 3 March 2014 and that any subsequent amendments to the Pay Policy Statement required during the year would be brought back to the General Purposes Committee for consideration before being submitted to Full Council for approval.

## **6. Review of Disciplinary Appeals Process**

The committee received a report from Cara Davani (HR Director) regarding the council's Disciplinary Appeals process. Members were reminded that in January 2013 the committee had agreed that a pilot scheme be established for a period of twelve months trialling new appeals arrangements. These arrangements required that appeals against dismissal for gross misconduct would be heard by a senior officer, rather than a member Panel, unless requested otherwise by the appellant. A request for a member panel was required to be approved by the HR Director. The report set out a review of this pilot scheme and recommended the continuation of the arrangements.

Cara Davani advised that the scheme had worked well and drew members' attention to the breakdown of appeals held within the period. There had been 13 disciplinary hearings held that had resulted in dismissal and 10 subsequent appeal hearings heard in accordance with the new arrangements. There had been no requests for an appeal to be heard by a member Panel. The Trade Unions had been consulted as part of the review of the pilot scheme and had confirmed that they were content with for the arrangements to continue.

In the ensuing discussion, members commented that they were pleased that the new arrangements had been successful. It was noted that union representation at appeals was less than might be expected and it was queried what number of appellants chose to be accompanied by a colleague. With reference to the breakdown of representation at appeal hearings set out in the report, it was noted that there had been incidences of appellants being represented by Trade Unions not recognised by the council; a member subsequently queried which unions the council did not recognise. Assurance was also sought that requests for member Panels could be made by an appellant.

Cara Davani advised that Trade Unions could not refuse to provide representation to their members if requested. Appellants were informed in writing of their rights regarding the appeal, including that they could be accompanied by a colleague if they wished. It was also confirmed to the committee that the new arrangements allowed an appellant to request that their appeal be heard by a member Panel. With regard to unions recognised by the council, Cara Davani explained that the council worked with the Teachers' Unions, the GMB and UNISON.

The committee thanked the officers for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the findings of the pilot be noted;
- (ii) that appeals against dismissal for gross misconduct be heard by senior officers, except where an application for the appeal to be heard by a member Panel has been made and agreed by the HR Director.

## 7. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

M BUTT  
Chair