



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Wednesday 5 November 2014 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Butt (Chair), Councillor and Councillors Denselow, Hirani, Kansagra, McLennan, Pavey and Perrin

Also present: Councillor Chohan

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 17 July 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

None.

4. **Deputations (if any)**

None.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillor S Choudhary be appointed Chair of the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee in place of Councillor Crane;
- (ii) That Councillor Perrin be appointed to the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee in place of Councillor Crane;
- (iii) That Councillor Kabir be appointed as a substitute member to the Staff Appeals Sub Committee in place of Councillor Crane;
- (iv) That Councillor Crane be appointed as substitute member to the Senior Staff Appointments Sub Committee in place of Councillor Perrin;
- (v) That Councillor Crane be appointed to the West London Waste Authority in place of Councillor Perrin;

- (vi) That Councillor crane be appointed to the London Road Safety Council in place of Councillor Perrin.

6. Learning and development policy

Cara Davani (HR Director) presented a report to the committee detailing the proposed new Learning and Development Policy. The Policy set out the council's position regarding Learning and Development opportunities available to staff and would replace the current arrangements as part of the ongoing review of HR policies and procedures. The Policy was in line with best practice and had been agreed by the Trade Unions and HRIG, the feedback from which had been incorporated in the draft before the committee.

Cara Davani advised that the new Policy would establish a consistent approach across the council to work experience, internships and support for staff pursuing professional qualifications. Highlighting the key changes encompassed by the Policy, Cara Davani explained that work experience opportunities offered by the council would be targeted at those who lived in the borough. The council would no longer support unpaid internships and it was proposed that a minimum term of three months be established. It was explained that the draft before the committee referenced a minimum term of six months; however, following discussions with managers it had been considered appropriate to amend the proposal. A further policy was in development to provide a greater level of advice and guidance regarding work experience and internships and this would be submitted to the committee in due course. Members' attention was directed to paragraph 4.3 of the Learning and Development Policy. It was explained that in view of the budgetary pressures being faced by the council funding for professional qualifications could no longer be supported, though funding would still be made available for specific initiatives such as BAME Senior Management Development Programmes.

During the subsequent discussion, members sought an explanation of the rationale for setting a minimum internship term of three months. It was queried whether interns would be formally employed by the council and what the implications of this might be for the organisation. A member questioned whether the numbers of work experience and internship opportunities across the council were expected to change as a result of the policy. Further detail was sought regarding the recruitment and management of interns and those undertaking work experience and it was queried whether the council intended to consult businesses in the borough with regard to creating appropriate pathways into employment. The committee queried how work experience opportunities would be communicated to schools. Members agreed that the reference in the policy to paid time-off for those pursuing professional qualifications should be clarified to state that this was subject to the qualifications being relevant to their position as set out in the terms of the Time-Off policy. It was further agreed that applications from residents for internships should be prioritised above those of non-residents.

Responding to the points raised, Cara Davani advised that the proposal of a minimum period of three months for internships had arisen due to budgetary considerations; namely it had been felt that there would be greater opportunity to fund shorter internships. It was further explained that interns would be provided with

a contract of employment but this would be for a fixed term only and would specify that a particular piece of work was to be undertaken. Members were advised that while the existing arrangements had been reviewed the council had not offered any work experience or internship opportunities in recognition of the importance of ensuring that any positions made available were of a good quality. Further guidance regarding the recruitment and management of interns would be provided in the policy currently being developed; however, it was intended that a selective recruitment process would be applied for interns and, similarly, work experience applicants would be required to complete an application form, as it was considered a valuable part of the experience. It was acknowledged that there was a need to ensure that HR was more closely aligned with the Employment and Skills requirements of the borough. Consideration would be given to how best to make schools aware of the opportunities available.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That subject to the following amendments, the Learning & Development policy be agreed:
 - a. that the six month minimum internship term detailed in paragraph 4.4.1 be changed to three months.
 - b. that the reference to paid time-off for staff pursuing professional qualifications be clarified to explain that the qualification must be relevant to the position held by the member of staff.
- (ii) That the HR Director in consultation with the Chief Executive and then consultation with the relevant trade unions be authorised to make such other changes as might be necessary from time to time to the Learning & Development policy to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose'.

7. **Any other urgent business**

None.

8. **Exclusion of press and public**

RESOLVED:

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting as the following items contained exempt information as specified in Schedule 12A of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Variation Order 2006): namely, information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

9. **Senior manager restructuring proposals**

The committee had before them a report from the Chief Executive detailing senior management restructuring proposals. The report was not for publication as it referred to exempt information as specified in the Local Government Act 1972.

In presenting the report the committee, Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) acknowledged that the past four years had seen some of the most challenging financial conditions ever faced by local government and advised that the funding position for local government and the public sector over the next four years would become even more severe. The proposals set out in the report reflected the need to refocus the Council's senior management and corporate centre to meet the associated challenges of this funding environment and to deliver further savings by streamlining senior management costs. Christine Gilbert provided a detailed overview of the proposed restructure which would deliver savings of £1.4m and advised that, subject to the committee's approval, the statutory consultation period with staff would commence immediately.

In the subsequent discussion, members sought further detail regarding the rationale for elements of the proposal, including the placement within the structure of regulatory services, the web team and commissioning functions. It was queried whether the savings identified in the report accounted for redundancy costs and how the proposed structure compared to that of other London Boroughs. Members commented on the importance of working with the council's partners and queried how this would be affected by the proposals.

Addressing the committee's queries, Christine Gilbert explained that a review of regulatory services was currently underway and the suggested position within the new structure was anticipated to be a temporary solution pending the outcome of the review; however, further consideration could be given to this during the consultation period. Similarly, the proposed position of the web team could be re-examined during this time. The committee was reassured that the transfer of the commissioning functions from Adults did not remove the service delivery carried out by the department, which would retain appropriate oversight from the Strategic Director, Adults. The savings identified in the report did not account for redundancy costs but internal recruitment would be pursued before seeking to appoint externally. The resulting senior management team would be small compared to other London boroughs and it would be the responsibility of those at strategic director and operational director level to ensure that the council worked effectively with partner organisations. A further report would be submitted to the committee in due course following a review of terms and conditions to ensure that there was parity between the council and other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That subject to staff consultation the following be agreed:

- (i) The Environment and Neighbourhoods Department and the Assistant Chief Executive's Service be deleted and their functions be reallocated as set out in section 4 of the report;
- (ii) That the changes to the Regeneration and Growth Department as set out in section 4 of the report be made;
- (iii) That the Chief Operating Officer's Department be created as set out in section 4 of the report;

- (iv) That the commissioning functions from Adults, Children and Young People and Public Health be transferred to the new Strategic Commissioning Service in the Chief Operating Officer's Department;
- (v) That the posts set out at paragraph 2.5 of the report be deleted;
- (vi) That the following posts be created:
 - Chief Operating Officer (at Strategic Director level)
 - Operational Director, Strategic Commissioning and Business Intelligence
 - Head of Procurement
 - Operational Director, Community Services
 - Head of Performance and Programme Management
 - Chief Legal Officer
 - Head of Partnership and Transformation
 - Head of Culture
 - Head of Digital Services
 - Head of Brent Customer Services
- (vii) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make such other changes as may be needed to give effect to the proposals in this report.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

M BUTT
Chair