



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Monday 21 January 2019 at 5.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillors M Butt (Chair), McLennan (Vice-Chair), Agha, Colwill, Farah, Hirani, Krupa Sheth and Southwood (as substitute for Councillor Tatler)

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tatler, with Councillor Southwood present as a Substitute Member.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 5 December 2018, be approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

(Item 7 of the minutes of the minutes of the previous meeting)

In relation to the appointments made to the Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee, it was noted that Ms Francesca Hammond was no longer Unison's representative at the Sub-Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the necessary arrangements to appoint her successor at the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee be made.

6. **Calculation of Council Tax Base 2019/20**

Ravinder Jassar (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report setting out the Council Tax base for 2018/19 in order to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory role under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).

Members noted that calculation of the Tax Base was based on a formula involving two elements:

- A. the number of taxable properties shown as “Band D equivalents” which for 2018/19 had been calculated at 98,985 net properties; and
- B. the expected collection rate for the year, which was 97.63% and had not been changed from 2018/19.

Therefore, the calculation of the Council Tax base for 2019/20 was proposed as follows – A (98,985) multiplied by B (97.63%) = 96,639

Mr Jassar added that when the number of taxable properties shown as ‘Band D equivalents’ had been calculated in October 2018, the Finance Team had taken into account the fact that the data from the Council’s Planning Service showed a large number of consented schemes likely to be completed in 2019/20. Therefore, the Local Authority had liaised with the Valuation Office Agency (VAO) to gather information on the number of properties awaiting banding. This would be reviewed during 2019/20 and if the new properties had at that time come on stream at a slower rate than expected, then it may be prudent to adopt a lower rate of growth for 2020/21 to keep the collection fund in balance.

Members asked questions that related to the impact of new build projections and empty homes. In response, Mr Jassar explained that the Empty Homes policy did not affect the Council Tax Base setting process as the number of units would remain constant. However, if the number of empty homes in the Borough decreased, this would mean that the Council would be able to collect a greater amount of Council Tax. Mr Jassar added that new build projections could be affected by an economic downturn, a slowing housing market and the impact of Brexit on housebuilding. Therefore, it would be prudent to expect that approximately half of the estimated number of new builds would be constructed. Mr Jassar said that he would discuss any potential backlog related to the banding of properties due to be completed in 2019/20 with the VOA.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Calculation of Council Tax Base 2019/20 report, be noted;
- (ii) The band D equivalent number of properties be calculated, as shown, in accordance with the Government regulations;
- (iii) The collection rate for Council Tax for 2019/20 be set at 97.63%; and
- (iv) Subject to (ii) and (iii) above, a Council Tax Base for 2019/20 of 96,639 Band D equivalent properties be approved.

7. Severance Approval

Debra Norman (the Council’s Director of Legal and HR) introduced the report which sought the approval for one further severance payment in addition to the ones agreed at the Committee meeting on 5 December 2018. Ms Norman explained that

the employee concerned had been included in the total number of applications for voluntary redundancy, but due to a delay in receiving the pension capital cost for the individual, it had not been possible to consider the application in December 2018. Having received the information, it had been noted that when the pension capital cost had been added to the redundancy payment, the overall severance payment had exceeded the £100,000 threshold and, therefore, required the Committee's approval.

Ms Norman pointed out that authorising this payment would have a marginal impact on the overall expenditure of the scheme.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Severance Approval report, be noted;
- (ii) The severance payment set out in the report be approved; and
- (iii) The fact that this payment did not include any element additional to sums calculated in accordance with the Council's Managing Change Policy and the requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme be noted.

8. Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Thomas Cattermole (the Council's Head of Executive and Member Services) introduced the report and explained that in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, every local authority in England and Wales had to undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places in its area within a 16 month period commencing from 1 October 2018 to 31 January 2020.

Mr Cattermole pointed out that 10 electoral wards had been affected with minor alterations in nine of them. The biggest change had been in Tokyngton ward where it had been recommended to completely redraw the boundaries for polling districts CTO1 and CTO2, with Brent Civic Centre and the Yellow Pavillion (Harbutt Road) proposed to be used as polling places respectively.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations report, be noted;
- (ii) The following changes be approved:

Brondesbury Park ward:

For polling district HBP5, Landau House Community Centre polling place be replaced by the Brondesbury Bowling Club Pavilion, Chatsworth Road.

Dudden Hill ward:

Polling districts CDU1 and CDU2 be merged and St Catherine's Church be used as the polling place for the new polling district (CDU1).

The remaining polling districts CDU3-CDU6 be renamed CDU2-CDU5.

Harlesden ward:

The properties in Bridge Court, 41 Craven Park be moved from polling district CHA1 into CHA5.

The properties in Fig Tree Close be moved from polling district CHA3 into CHA5.

Northwick Park ward:

A new polling district be created to serve the University of Westminster Halls of Residence and the Northwick Park Hospital nursing accommodation. This polling district be named NNP2 and the polling place be the Northwick Park Hospital Social Club.

The existing polling districts NNP2-NNP5 be renamed NNP3 - NNP6.

Preston ward:

The properties in Fernleigh Court be moved from polling district NPR2 into NPR1.

Queens Park ward:

The properties in Mortimer Road be moved from polling district HQP3 into HQP2.

Queensbury ward:

Polling districts NQY5 and NQY6 be merged and Roe Green Primary School be used as the polling place for the new polling district.

Stonebridge ward:

The boundary between polling districts CST5 and CST6 be moved to the railway line.

Sudbury ward:

The properties on East Lane, Stilecroft Gardens and Watford Road be moved from polling district NSU1 into NSU4.

Tokington ward:

The boundaries for polling districts CTO1 and CTO2 be completely redrawn; that Brent Civic Centre be used as the polling place for CTO1; and the Yellow Pavilion, Harbutt Road be used as the polling place for CTO2.

9. **Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies (if any)**

None.

10. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

None.

11. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 5.57 pm

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair