



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 9:30am

PRESENT: Councillor Tatler (Vice Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Georgiou, Grahl, Knight, Krupa Sheth and Nerva.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Muhammed Butt and Councillor Farah, with Councillor Tatler acting as Chair in Councillor Muhammed Butt's absence and Councillor Nerva in attendance as an alternate for Councillor Farah.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no formal declarations made during the meeting.

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 Monday 11 September 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no matters arising.

6. **Recruitment and Retention Payments for Adult Social Care Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Visual Impairment Rehabilitation Officers**

Rachel Crossley, Corporate Director of Care, Health and Wellbeing, introduced a report outlining the proposed recruitment and retention arrangements to support and stabilise the Adult Social Care workforce in Brent, to ensure safe and consistent service delivery to residents. The Committee was advised that the approach complemented a range of strategies as part of the Adult Social Care transformation programme and provided greater parity with the Children's Social Care workforce recruitment and retention arrangements that had been agreed at the General Purposes Committee in May 2023.

In considering the report the Committee noted:

- Research and benchmarking had been undertaken in to the effectiveness of the proposed strategies, most of which replicated strategies used across other London Boroughs. Brent had also trialled market supplement payments for Occupational Therapists. The trial and research undertaken had concluded that the suggested strategies were effective in retaining staff.
- The anticipated benefits the strategy would have on social care clients in terms of a more consistent and stable workforce.
- That wider considerations other than financial remuneration were being explored to encourage the retention of permanent staff, these included increased opportunities for career progression and greater operational support.

As there were no further Committee queries in relation to the report, the Committee **RESOLVED** to agree to the use of recruitment and retention initiatives to all teams with the department, as follows:

- (1) To make a one-off payment of £5,000 to newly recruited permanent qualified social workers, occupational therapist and visual impairment rehabilitation officers' staff on grades PO2 – PO7, on satisfactory completion of their probationary period and repayable where an employee leaves the council within 12 months of receiving the payment.
- (2) To make annual retention payments of £3,000 to all qualified social workers, occupational therapy and visual impairment rehabilitation officer staff on grades PO2 to PO7.
- (3) To make retention payments for Best Interest Assessors of £2,000 a year for being on the rota to carry out statutory duties commensurate with the role.
- (4) To make retention payments of £1,000 a year for qualified Practice Educators to take two students a year.

7. Flexible Working Arrangements Review

Sue Evans, Interim Director of HR & OD introduced a report that detailed the proposed changes to the borough/office attendance requirements within the refreshed Flexible Working Policy. The Committee was advised that the Council remained committed to provide flexible working opportunities for staff, however it was also felt to be paramount that staff were available to offer maximum support to residents. Therefore, following consultation with Trade Unions a two phased approach was proposed that would see staff in the borough/office a minimum of two days a week from 1 January 2024, increasing to a minimum of three days a week from 1 April 2024.

In considering the report the Committee noted:

- The benefits the proposed changes would have to residents as well as the increased opportunities for staff development and collaborative working.
- That a series of briefings had been arranged for managers to enable them to support employees in adjusting to the change; this would include making

reasonable adjustments in line with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations.

- It would be beneficial to include a section in the policy on how to effectively record any reasonable adjustments agreed.
- In relation to section 7.1 of the policy, it should be made clear that permanent remote working outside of the UK was not permitted.
- That the policy would be reviewed in 12 months to assess any impact the policy may have on recruitment, retention, and productivity.

As there were no further Committee queries in relation to the report, the Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Note and approve the Revised Flexible Working Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (2) Agree the Equalities Impact Assessment, as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report.

8. Appointments to Sub Committees & Outside Bodies

There were no appointments to be considered in relation to any of the General Purposes Sub Committees.

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 9:58 am.

COUNCILLOR TATLER
Vice Chair in the Chair