

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Thursday, 24th February 2005 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor John (Chair) and Councillors D Long, Lyon (part) and R S Patel.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Blackman R Colwill and H B Patel.

1. Declarations of Interest

None made.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 20th December 2004

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th December 2004 be approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Deputations

None.

5. Brent Care at Home Admission Agreement

The Executive agreed on 17th January 2005 to award the borough-wide contract for homecare services to Goldsborough Home Care Ltd trading as Brent Care at Home (BCAH), subject to this Committee agreeing that Brent may enter into an admission agreement in respect of the Council's pension scheme with BCAH on the terms set out in the report. The Director of Finance informed the Committee that a departure from the usual criteria was being recommended whereby BCAH would not be required to pay the Council's actuarial costs as a condition of being admitted to the pension scheme. It would be more cost effective for the Council to meet this cost and allow better budgetary control of the contract.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that an admission agreement be entered into with BCAH in relation to the borough-wide homecare contract;
- (ii) that an exception be agreed to the Council's usual policy that BCAH should not be required to meet the Council's actuarial

expenses associated with the creation of the admission agreement.

6. **Early Retirement in Local Government – Discretionary Payment**

The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2004 come into force on the 1st April 2005. These Regulations amend the earliest age that a scheme member can retire (other than for ill health) from age 50 to age 55, although there will be protection for those members of the scheme who are aged 50 or over as at the 31st March 2005. The report drew Members' attention to that change and recommended that Brent's early retirement policy under The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 be amended so as to be consistent with the LGPS Regulations.

The Director of Finance advised that the report had been given to trades unions and circulated at the meeting was a response from Unison opposing the changes to the Pension Scheme due to come into force on 1st April. Unison also opposed the proposed changes to the Discretionary Payment Policy. The Director of Finance circulated revised recommendations to his report given the uncertainty as to when the amendments would come into force as negotiations were currently taking place with central government. The Director added that the current scheme was unaffordable however the delay in a final decision was causing problems for practitioners and people planning their retirement. He added that there was a need for greater consistency and transparency across the public sector.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that it be noted that if the new regulations come into force from 1st April 2005 the earliest age at which benefits can be paid from the LGPS will be increased from age 50 to age 55, subject to
 - (a) protection for members who are aged 50 or over on the 31st March 2005, as they will retain age 50 as their protected earliest retirement age
 - (b) ill health benefits continuing to be payable to members who are retired on grounds of permanent ill health regardless of their age
- (ii) that from the date any regulations come into force that amend the earliest age that a Scheme member can retire (other than for ill health) from age 50 to age 55, members, who are not subject to protection under these regulations, may not receive compensatory added years unless they are retired on the

grounds of redundancy or efficiency on or after reaching the age of 55.

7. Parliamentary Elections 2005 – Polling Places and Stations

The Committee received a report seeking their agreement to the polling places to be used for the forthcoming Parliamentary elections. The list of places took into account decisions made at the November meeting of this Committee when alterations to polling district boundaries were agreed.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the list of polling places appended to the report from the Democratic Services Manager be approved for the Parliamentary Elections should they be held in 2005;
- (ii) that should Studio 95 not be available, delegated authority be given to the Democratic Services Manager to use a hut in the car park of Willesden Library as an alternative polling station for polling districts EBP1 and EWG7;
- (iii) that in the event of any unforeseen changes between now and the General Election date, authority be delegated to the Democratic Services Manager to designate polling places, in consultation with the Leaders of the three political groups.

8. Election Alert System

The Committee received a report outlining the proposal from Democratic Services to create an email and text message alert system to provide members of the public with information in the run up to the general election. The Democratic Services Manager advised that the text message system was not yet in operation however the email alert was available for use. He also gave a short presentation of the Election website which contained information on key dates and would detail results in addition to containing links to other web pages with important Borough information. Members welcomed the initiative which would be of value to the local community, noting that it would also be used for local elections. They also noted the conventional publicity in place to encourage registration as outlined by the Electoral Services Manager including advertising in the Brent Magazine, the annual canvass and a national campaign by the Electoral Commission.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on the Election Alert System be agreed and noted.

9. **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

RESOLVED:-

that the following sets of minutes be received and noted:-

- (i) Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee – 23rd November 2004
- (ii) Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee – 30th November 2004
- (iii) Licensing Sub-Committee (A) – 1st December 2004
- (iv) Brent Pension Fund Sub-Committee (Special) – 17th January 2005.

10. **Sub-Committee Membership Changes**

None.

11. **Appointments to Outside Bodies**

None.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that it be noted the next scheduled meeting of the General Purposes Committee would take place on Wednesday, 23rd March 2005.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

A JOHN
Chair

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