

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 23rd March 2005 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor John (Chair) and Councillors D Long, Lyon, R S Patel and Councillor Sayers (alternate for R Colwill).

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

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor D Long declared a personal interest in item 6 "The Brent Remodelling Process – Proposed Pay Scales for Support Staff in Schools". Councillor Long explained that some of his family members were employed in Brent schools.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 24th February 2005

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th February 2005 be approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Deputations

None.

5. No Smoking Policy

The Committee received a report considering a review of the Council's No Smoking policy introduced by Rowena Degouttes (Senior Employee Relations Advisor, Human Resources). The report sought the Committee's agreement to recommendations intended to reduce the health risks to employees and members of the public caused by smoking. Members' attention was drawn to the intention to remove the right from employees to take smoking breaks or to smoke during working hours. Members noted that the report also recommended making all Council buildings completely smoke free and noted that this would be a future Best Value indicator.

Ms Degouttes advised that a report had been given to trade unions and that the unions were mainly in favour of the policy as it sought to reduce the health risks to employees. However, the unions were opposing the withdrawal of smoking breaks. Some Members of the Committee expressed the view that a strict workplace policy would help

those who wished to give up smoking. The Chair noted that she had previously received communications from concerned residents who wished to express their disapproval for the smoking within the Town Hall.

The Committee also noted that recommendation 2.5 was a matter for the Executive whose responsibility it was to consider decisions affecting the management of Council buildings.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the entitlement for employees to take smoking breaks and to smoke within working hours be withdrawn;
- (ii) that where employees do wish to smoke before or after work and at lunch time this is done outside Council buildings (the existing provision to use smoking rooms be withdrawn);
- (iii) that employees who wish to stop smoking be given help and support as provided by the Brent Primary Care Trust, Stop Smoking Service and that service areas reimburse employees at a maximum cost of £12.80 for Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for each employee;
- (iv) that the Council invite each governing body to adopt this variation to the policy in their own schools;
- (v) that the Executive consider whether the Council should stop smoking in the Town Hall in all areas including the foyer area of the Paul Daisley Hall.

6. The Brent Remodelling Process – Proposed Pay Scales for Support Staff in Schools

The Committee received a report which sought to obtain agreement for a new salary structure for Teaching Assistants in schools, the principles of which would be applied later to other support staff, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the remodelling process in Brent. Members were asked to agree that the new GLPC Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme, and the associated pay scales would be used to determine the pay for Teaching Assistants in schools and that this principle should be applied to the remaining support staff when the recommendations for their pay had been completed.

David Maton, (Workforce Remodelling Co-ordinator), explained that schools needed agreement on the new salary structure in order to be able to budget accurately for the coming financial year. He also advised Members that the new scheme would reflect the flexibility required by the job descriptions. Some Members of the Committee

enquired what comment had been received from the schools regarding this report. In response, Mr Maton advised that whilst the schools had not seen the report, the Head Teachers' working group had been consulted and had agreed to the report's proposals.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the new GLPC Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme be agreed, and the associated pay scales be used to determine the pay for Teaching Assistants in schools and that this principle be applied to the remaining support staff when recommendations for their pay have been completed;
- (ii) that the proposed salary structure for Teaching Assistants in schools, as set out in appendix A to the report, be agreed and implemented with immediate effect.

7. Sub-Committee Membership Changes

There were none.

8. Appointments to Outside Bodies

There were none.

9. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:-

that it be noted the next scheduled meeting of the General Purposes Committee would be agreed at the Special Council Meeting on Monday, 16th May 2005.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

There was none.

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED:-

that the press and public now be now excluded from the meeting as the following item contains a category of exempt information as specified in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely:-

“Any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services.”

12. **Agreement for Payroll Processing Services**

Implementation of the Agreement for Payroll and IT Support Services, entered into with ITNET UK Limited (“ITNET”) on 16th December 2003 (“the 2003 Agreement”), had been delayed for various reasons. It had been necessary, however, to maintain the payroll services and officers had, under delegated powers, extended the Council’s current Payroll Services Agreement also with ITNET which was executed in June 1999 (“the 1999 Agreement”) by three separate Deeds of Variation. The 1999 Agreement was scheduled to expire on 30th April 2005 and the report now before Committee requested authority for a further extension whilst officers continued to resolve outstanding issues with ITNET.

The report drew Members’ attention to the need to update the service provided, and to improve it. The Director of Finance, Duncan McLeod thanked the Payroll and Pensions Officer, Barry Hilder, for his hard work and added that they hoped to move forward with this service shortly. Members noted that this report would also be presented to the Executive.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) that officers be authorised to further extend the Council’s Payroll Services Agreement with ITNET UK Limited dated 2nd June 1999 to 31st March 2006, or the acceptance date of the new payroll system under the Council’s Agreement for Payroll and IT Support Services with ITNET UK Limited dated 16th December 2003, whichever is the earlier, subject to the Executive also giving its approval to this extension.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.

A JOHN
Chair

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