



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Monday 15 October 2018 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Agha, Farah, Hirani, Krupa Sheth, Tatler and Kansagra

Also present: Councillors M Patel

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Colwill

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Colwill, with Councillor Kansagra present as 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 2 August 2018, be approved as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

6. Recruitment and Retention Payments for Children and Young People's Social Workers

At the Chair's invitation, Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) , introduced the report which informed the committee of the recommended measures for addressing existing challenges in recruiting and retaining permanent staff on social work roles within the Children and Young People's (CYP) department. He stated that the issue had been ongoing and was first raised at a General Purposes meeting back in March 2016. In noting the progress made since then, including not only the establishment of a more stable

leadership within the department, review of career opportunities and improving training offers but also general re-aligning of services and formation of smaller teams, Mr Chapman explained that structural difficulties however remain, with only 44% permanency rates of experienced social workers and managers as of September 2018. Whilst acknowledging the need for a long-term strategic approach, Mr Chapman stated that the proposals set out in the report were therefore expected to provide an immediate response to the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff and were seen as a positive step in the right direction.

In welcoming the report, members asked questions which centred mainly on the financial and equality implications of the proposals. In terms of financial implications, officers explained that while the proposals would not generate financial savings, they were expected to reduce pressure on services by minimising the need for agency staff expenses of £7200 per year per person. A query was also raised on the rationale behind awarding £3600 retention payment to new recruits on PO5 and PO7 grades and whether that would put existing staff at a disadvantage. Mr Chapman explained that the payment mirrored what staff on scales PO1 to PO4 were currently being paid with the difference being that the funds to new recruits would be paid as lump sum as opposed to monthly instalments. He continued to say that payments would not be pensionable and would be paid at the end of a probation period, as a way of incentivising staff to remain in the organisation. The committee was assured that the proposals were not putting anyone at disadvantage and payments would be subject to continuous review, in line with market needs.

Discussions moved on with members seeking further clarification on the equality implications of the proposals, in particular the risk of creating further imbalance within the Council and the basis on which the proposed payments would be made. Whilst putting strong emphasis on the importance of the assumptions behind the proposals, namely that funding would be met within the CYP department, that proposals would lead to a reduction in cost pressures and would create a positive impact, members were particularly mindful of the implications on other professions within the Council and felt that due regard should be paid onto the impact on current staff and ensuring overall fairness of the proposals. Referencing the report, officers stated that whilst careful consideration to the extent to which proposals may disproportionately affect staff had been given, the market evidence set out in the report justified certain pay disparity. Members were assured that the proposed payments would be subject to a satisfactory performance, underpinned by a detailed criteria, in line with council policies and following a successful completion of the probation period.

Finally, with regards to next steps, the Committee heard that a recruitment campaign was planned for late October – early November 2018, which, subject to approval by the committee, would also include reference to the outlined proposals. The initiative would be subject to regular monitoring and would be reviewed after 6 months to report on the effectiveness of the proposals.

RESOLVED that:

- i. The contents of the report be noted
- ii. In noting the time limits for their implementation, the following arrangements, as detailed in the report, be approved:

- a. Introduction of a one-off, £5,000 payment to newly recruited permanent social work managers, social work practice consultants and senior social workers in hard to recruit to teams within the Localities and LAC and Permanency Services, on satisfactory completion of a probationary period.
 - b. Introduction of a retention payment of £3600 to the social work managers and social work practice consultant posts, payable after 36 months in role and on a recurring 36 month cycle, subject to annual review of market conditions. Senior social workers currently receive a retention payment therefore no change is required to these roles.
 - c. To allow the department the discretion to provide relocation package support to key posts, up to a maximum of £5,000 in individual cases.
- iii. Authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, Children and Young people, in consultation and regular review with the Director of Legal and HR, to determine how recruitment and retention payments were offered across the department, with a continued focus on hard to recruit to posts.
 - iv. That saving figures be produced as part of the 6 months review to demonstrate financial improvements resulting from the proposals.

7. Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

There were no appointments to sub-committees/outside bodies to report on.

8. Any other urgent business

None.

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

None.

The meeting closed at 6.16 pm

M BUTT
Chair