



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Monday 8 November 2021 at 10:35am (following on from the preceding Cabinet meeting)

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

Also present: Councillors Kennelly and Southwood

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Colwill

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Colwill with Councillor Kansagra (following his apologies for lateness) in attendance as a substitute member.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests made at 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 13 September 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

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

There were no matters arising.

The order of business was amended at the meeting in order to consider the agenda items as follows – Item 7 (Additional Bank Holiday); Item 8 (Recruitment & Retention of Social Workers Children & Young People); Item 9 (Pension Agreement – Greater London Authority and Inner London Education Authority) and Item 6 (Review of Polling Districts, Places and Polling Stations)

The minutes reflect the order in which the items were listed on the agenda.

6. **Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations**

Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive and (Acting Returning Officer) introduced a report detailing the review of the local authority polling districts and polling places as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. The review had been designed to reflect the changes in electoral ward boundaries introduced as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England review of electoral wards in Brent, with the new arrangements due to come into effect for the local government elections in May 2022.

In considering the report, members noted the focus of the review only on internal polling district boundaries and extensive nature of the consultation which had been undertaken on the proposed arrangements, as detailed within section 5 and Appendix B of the report.

Prior to considering the proposed changes in electoral arrangements Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Chair, invited Councillor Kennelly to address the meeting whom he advised had requested to speak in relation to the proposed changes within Preston Ward.

Councillor Kennelly advised that whilst supportive of the proposals relating to polling stations PR1 and PR3 he had concerns relating the proposed use of the Century Bowling & Social Club Logan Road as polling station PR2. The concerns related to safety and accessibility of the location, with Wembley Primary School suggested as a possible alternative. In response, it was confirmed that additional legal advice may need to be sought in relation to the suitability of the suggested alternative site given it fell just outside of the Polling District and there was a requirement to ensure there were no other suitable venues within the District.

In addition, members noted the additional public representations which had been submitted in writing by Paul Lorber and circulated in advance of the meeting. These related to the proposed changes within Sudbury ward. The additional submission had asked members to consider an increase in the number of polling stations to four based on a revised division of polling districts. Members noted that development of the proposals within the report had already been subject to extensive research and consultation, with the proposed arrangements having been amended and designed to reflect the outcome of that process in order to maintain strong and identifiable boundaries wherever possible. Members were keen to avoid further changes that would result in boundaries between polling stations and their districts being split and on this basis advised they were minded to accept the proposed changes as detailed within the report rather than the alternative proposals submitted within the additional representations considered at the meeting.

Councillor Muhammed Butt as Chair then invited Katie Smith, Head of Executive & Member Services, to provide a brief summary of the proposed changes in electoral arrangements, as set out in detail within section 6 and the individual ward maps included as Appendix A of the report. Members noted the outline and summary of the proposed changes, which included:

- Changes to polling district boundaries in all 22 wards;
- A reduction in the overall number of polling places under the new arrangements in 2022 from 103 to 95 (compared to the GLA election) which reflected the boundary changes and move to wards with fewer polling districts;

- No changes being made to 81 polling places, with 14 new places being recommended.

Members were advised that the proposals to change polling places reflected comments received as part of the consultation, particularly in relation to reducing the use and reliance on schools and need to ensure that the new polling districts were served by polling stations that were accessible. As a result, 21 existing polling stations had not been identified for future use, including nine schools and five temporary buildings (portacabins), which the Committee fully supported.

In considering the proposed changes outlined within the detailed proposals in section 4 and Appendix A of the report, members highlighted the following comments:

- Kenton Ward (Polling Station KE6) – Concerns expressed regarding suitability of the continued use of Preston & Mall Youth and Community Centre, given its road access. Whilst noting the comments raised, the Committee again recognised the extensive nature of the review undertaken, accessibility of the venue by pedestrians and previous use of the venue as a polling station. It was therefore agreed to support its recommended inclusion as an existing polling station.
- Members advised that subject to the final changes agreed, they would be keen to ensure that a clear communications strategy and signage was in place on the day of the election to re-direct electors to any new polling stations where there had been changes from the previous arrangements. It was noted this would be in addition to notice of any changes being provided within the Household Notification Letters and Poll Cards.
- Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Chair, advised that in addition to the representations considered earlier in the meeting he had also received a request to speak from Councillor Georgiou in relation to the arrangements within Alperton ward. Whilst Councillor Georgiou had been unable to attend the meeting due to illness, members were advised that the proposals within the ward had included replacing Abbey Estate Community Centre and the Nursery Building at Lyon Park Primary School as polling places with St George Grand Union which would serve both the AL3 and AL4 polling districts. This was in view of the continued unsuitability of the Community Centre for use as a polling station and more accessible nature and space available within the Grand Union building.

As no further issues were raised members thanked all those who had engaged in the consultation process on the new arrangements and officers within Executive & Member Services and the Elections Team for their effort and work in preparing the detailed proposals.

Having considered the report it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) Having considered the additional representations made in respect of Preston, Sudbury and Kenton wards, to agree the proposals in relation to these wards subject to the Chief Executive as (Acting) Returning Officer undertaking a

further review in relation to the Preston ward to consider whether alternative recommendations needed to be made.

Post Meeting Update: Following the meeting a further site visit has been undertaken to the Century Bowling & Sports Social Club and since access to the polling place can be secured from both the north and south of the site, the issues relating to safety and accessibility of the location were deemed to be mitigated. Highly visible signage will also be provided.

- (2) Subject to (1) above, to approve the changes to polling district boundaries and location of polling places as set out in Section 6 and Appendix A of the report.
- (3) To delegate authority to the (Acting) Returning Officer to approve any alternative polling place in the event that any polling place becomes unavailable or is found to be unsuitable in the run up to the election and to make this change on a permanent basis following the election.

7. **Additional Bank Holiday**

Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive, introduced a report seeking the Committee's approval to recognise 24 December 2021 as an additional Bank Holiday leave day for staff.

In considering the report, members were keen to recognise and acknowledge the commitment, dedication and hard work of staff throughout the year in what continued to be such challenging times during recovery from the pandemic.

It was also noted that should members be minded to agree the proposal, this would not involve any additional financial implications and arrangements would remain in place to ensure the continued provision of emergency and out of hours' services.

As a result, it was **RESOLVED** to designate the 24 December 2021 as an additional Bank Holiday leave day for staff.

8. **Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers - Children & Young People**

Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration & Improved Outcomes) introduced a report providing the Committee with an update on the impact on the decision taken in October 2018 to introduce recruitment and retention initiatives for key social work roles within the Children and Young People (CYP) department. In addition, the report detailed the current position regarding social work staff retention within the department, with particular reference to current challenges for frontline child protection social work recruitment and retention in the Localities Service, along with a proposed amended approach in order to address the issues identified.

Members noted the updated benchmarking details, set out within section 3.3 of the report, along with the importance of Brent remaining competitive in the market place for good quality staff in order to provide stability across the service and in seeking to reduce the reliance on agency staff.

In welcoming the positive improvements that had been made in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff since the introduction of the current initiatives, as detailed in section 4 of the report, members also recognised the ongoing challenges particularly within the Localities Service. Members were therefore supportive of the proposed amendments recommended to current initiatives based on an increase in the one-off payment to newly recruited permanent social work staff and retention payments for all permanent qualified social work staff on grades PO1-PO7 in the most hard to recruit teams within the Localities service.

Having welcomed the progress being made, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To amend two of the current recruitment and retention initiatives until the end of the 2022/23 financial year, with arrangements being reviewed again in late 2022 as follows:
 - To increase the one-off payment to newly recruited permanent social work staff on grades PO1-PO7 in the most hard to recruit to teams within the Localities service (Referral and Assessment teams, East and West long-term teams) from £5000 to £7500, on satisfactory completion of a probationary period; and
 - To increase retention payments in the hard to recruit to social work teams in the Localities service, for all qualified social work staff graded PO1-PO7, from £1200 to £4500 per annum.

- (2) To agree that other previously agreed recruitment and retention initiatives be maintained as follows:
 - To continue the one-off payment of £5000 to newly recruited permanent social work managers, practice consultants and senior social workers in all other eligible teams, on satisfactory completion of a probationary period.
 - To continue retention payment of £3600 to all other eligible qualified social work managers and social work practice consultant posts, payable after 36 months in role and on a recurring 36-month cycle. Senior social workers currently receive a retention payment. To continue the existing market supplement (retention payment) of £1,200 per annum to all other qualified social work eligible roles.
 - To allow the department the discretion to provide relocation package support to key posts, up to a maximum of £5,000 in individual cases together with any COVID related costs associated with the recruitment of overseas social workers.
 - To continue the opportunity for all qualified social workers within the remit of the scheme to rent key worker housing.

- (3) To continue with the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director, Children & Young People, in consultation and regular review with the Director of Legal, HR and Audit and Investigations, to determine how recruitment and retention payments were offered across the department, with a continued focus on hard to recruit to posts.

9. **Pension Agreement - Greater London Authority and Inner London Education Authority**

Councillor McLennan introduced a report that detailed a proposed agreement between the Council and the London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA) in respect of funding the historical pension liabilities of Greater London Council (GLC) and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA).

In considering the report, members noted the background to the historical pension liabilities resulting from the abolition of the GLC and ILEA and negotiations undertaken between the Society of London Treasurers and LPFA in order to reach an agreement in relation to the funding of these liabilities. Members were advised that the Council had established an earmarked reserve for this purpose with the agreement not expected to create any additional budgetary pressure as liabilities decreased over time.

Having considered the report and information with the accompanying exempt appendix, the Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Note the additional liability due to the LPFA as at 31 March 2019, relating to deferred, pensioner and dependent liabilities for which the Council was responsible.
- (2) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance to agree the final terms of and sign an agreement between the LPFA and London Boroughs in respect of the Council's GLC/ILEA liabilities, as detailed within Appendix A (containing exempt information) of the report.
- (3) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance to manage the funding of the liabilities until full repayment.

10. **Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies**

There were no appointments to be considered at the meeting.

11. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am

M BUTT
Chair