



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE **Held as an online meeting on Monday 15 March 2021 at 9.30 am**

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

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Colwill with Councillor Kansagra in remote attendance as a 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 18 January 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

6. Brent Workforce Equalities Data 2019/20 and Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Reporting March 2021

Martin Williams, Head of Human Resources, introduced the report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations providing the Committee with information on Brent's annual workforce equalities data, published in January 2021, and pay gap data relating to gender, ethnicity and disability prior to its publication.

Members noted that the 2019/20 annual workforce equalities data had been published, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report. In addition, the Pay Gap report on gender, which also included a breakdown by ethnicity and disability was due (as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report) to be published at the end of March 2021. Members were provided with a summary of the main headlines within the equalities data analysis, as detailed within section 3.6 of the report. These included a breakdown of the age, gender, disability and ethnicity profile of the workforce based on working age population.

Members also noted the pay gap analysis for the period ending March 2020 broken down between gender, ethnicity and disability, as detailed within section 3.7 of the report and compared to 2019 and 2018, as detailed within section 3.8 of the report. Details were also provided on the proportion of females, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and disabled employees in each pay quartile during 2020, as detailed in section 3.9 of the report.

Alongside the priority actions identified within the published Workforce Equalities report, the Pay Gap report had also identified a number of priority actions designed to address the pay gap issues during 2020-21, which had been set out within Appendix 2 of the report. These included:

- To continue monitoring internal promotions and progressions by gender, ethnicity and disability;
- To continue undertaking monitoring of new joiners' starting salary for grades PO5 and above by gender, ethnicity and disability;
- Continuing promotion of management development, apprenticeships, mentoring programmes and disability awareness initiatives as a means to support and encourage career advancement amongst the gender, ethnicity and disability characteristic groups;
- Use of employee learning via various mediums as a tool to upskill the workforce towards progression;
- To raise awareness of unconscious bias among employees, starting from corporate management and middle management;
- Continuing to encourage disclosure of data amongst employees for better quality data, which could be more reliably used for detailed analysis and meaningful proposals.

Members in welcoming the report and continued positive progress being made, highlighted the following comments:

- The need to ensure work continued in terms of ensuring that women were represented within the highest pay grades and senior level across the organisation.
- Whilst noting the progress made in terms of the representation of disabled employees across different pay grades, members noted that the percentage of employees classified as disabled within the workforce had remained the same as the previous year when compared with the working age population. In response, members were advised of the work being undertaken through the Disability Staff Forum to review measures in place to support staff with disabilities or interested in joining the Council. In noting the reliance on staff to self-report disability, which not all chose to do, members were keen to ensure the work outlined included a focus in encouraging self-reporting.
- Members also felt it important to highlight the increase in the percentage of staff now engaged and employed when compared to overall level of redundancies, which it was felt reflected the changing nature of the organisation, less reliance on Agency staff and increasing level of insourcing involving TUPE transfers.
- Confirmation was provided that recruitment was based on merit rather than the use of positive discrimination, with learning and development tools also being provided as a means of developing the workforce so they could take advantage of promotion or career pathway opportunities as they arose.

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

- (1) To note the findings from Brent's Workforce Equalities Report April 2019 to March 2020;
- (2) To note the findings from the Gender Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Report - March 2021.
- (3) To agree the proposed action plans contained within the above documents.

7. Severance Payments

Martin Williams, Head of Human Resources, introduced the report seeking approval to make severance payments to a number of officers, in particular pursuant to the council's voluntary redundancy scheme, where their redundancy and severance payment, when added to the pension strain costs that the council must bear as part of the Pension scheme rules, totaled over £100,000.

Members were advised that the report required at this late stage in the voluntary redundancy process had been due to the Government issuing the Exit Payment Cap Direction 2021, which had revoked the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020. Members were reminded that these regulations had introduced a £95,000 Exit Payments Cap. In addition, the report proposed a revision to the early retirement strain factors previously approved by the Committee.

Members noted the details provided within Appendix 1 of the report regarding the severance payments, which as a result of the change in regulations would now require approval of the Committee, in accordance with statutory guidance and the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2020-21. These included one redundancy not part of the voluntary redundancy scheme.

In considering the report, members noted the confirmation that the proposals were in accordance with the necessary financial and legal requirements. In response to a query raised regarding the role of redeployment as part of any wider restructuring process, members were advised that redeployment opportunities were offered to staff at potential risk of redundancy, however the matching process would require them to demonstrate they possessed the appropriate skills for the role. Whilst welcoming the rescinding of the Exit Payment Cap regulations, concerns were also expressed by members at the significant additional work this had created alongside the uncertainty for staff. Those individuals whose redundancy packages had been confirmed were also thanked by the Committee for their contribution and service to the council and residents.

In considering the recommendations, the Committee noted the information provided within the exempt appendix accompanying the report.

As a result of the discussion it was **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the severance payments, as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report (which had been exempt from publication);

- (2) To note that none of the payments in (1) above included any element additional to sums calculated in accordance with the council's Managing Change Policy and the requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme;
- (3) To agree, as the administering authority of the Brent Pension Fund, to revert to the previous early retirement strain factors provided by the Fund actuary, Hymans Robertson;
- (4) To agree, the payment of an unreduced pension under Regulation 30(7) of the Local Government Pension Scheme for a member of staff as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 following their redundancy on 31 December 2020.

8. Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

None

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

10. Any other urgent business

None

The meeting closed at 09:56

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair