



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Thursday 13 September 2012 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Butt (Chair), Councillor R Moher (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Beswick, Brown, Cheese, Hirani, Kansagra, Long, Lorber and J Moher

1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 June 2012 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

None.

4. **Deputations**

None.

5. **Flexible working**

The report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided details of the proposed flexible working policy and procedure designed to replace flexible working arrangements and give an improved offer for staff. The Interim Head of Human Resources, Cara Davani, advised that the existing arrangements were in need of review and had been updated to be easier to use and to formalise flexible working across the council to meet the requirements of the new Civic Centre. The trade unions viewed the changes positively.

In response to a question on support to managers and the impact on appraisals, Cara Davani advised that the focus would be on performance management with the emphasis on outputs. Communication was in place for the new arrangements to be rolled out between October 2012 and March 2013, a series of conferences on new ways of working was taking place and the managers would be supported by HR. Members heard that staff with disabilities would be proactively encouraged to be able to work under the new arrangements.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that approval be given to the draft policy with effect from 1 October 2012 to coincide with the introduction of the new employment contract for all employees;
- (ii) that it be noted that the flexible retirement policy would be amended due to legislative changes.

6. **Review of staff benefits**

Members recalled that in June 2012 approval had been given to the draft collective agreement on harmonised terms and conditions of employment. Cara Davani outlined, Interim Head of Human Resources outlined the outcome of the trade union ballots which had not resulted in universal agreement. As a result, it was now necessary to give those staff affected by the change, notice of the date on which new terms and conditions would come into effect.

Members expressed regret that the harmonisation implementation date would now have to be deferred from October 2012 to January 2013 reducing the level of savings achievable in 2012/13 to approximately £198,848. The view was put that efforts should be made to reduce this loss to the council particularly given the current council's current financial position.

RESOLVED:

that agreement be given to the implementation of the harmonisation package as set out in the detail of the report.

(Councillors Brown, Cheese and Lorber asked that their dissent be recorded).

7. **Disciplinary policy**

Cara Davani (Interim Head of Human Resources) introduced the report which detailed proposed changes to the council's disciplinary policy updated in line with recent changes in practice, procedures and caselaw and also with the general changes in the council's HR Policy Framework. Members' attention was drawn to the changes in the policy relating to appeals against dismissal and the proposal to retain member involvement for only those posts to which they had responsibility to appoint, that is, assistant director level and above. For posts below assistant director level, it was proposed that dismissal approval be signed off by the Assistant Director of People and Development or the Head of People Services and appeals against dismissal heard by senior officers in the same way as dismissals for other reasons such as absence, capability and redundancy. Separate arrangements would be in place for statutory posts. Cara Davani advised that to date, members serving on staff appeals committees had avoided being called to attend employment tribunals but this was increasingly being considered to not be acceptable.

In discussion, members considered the extent to which it was important to have a consistent approach for all staff and also whether the existing provision for a member level independent appeal process should continue to be retained or at least, subject to wider discussion. Cara Davani advised that the trade unions were not likely to support the proposals and that most cases were dealt with through

litigation. Members queried what the arrangements were in neighbouring boroughs. The committee heard that a meeting of the Employees Joint Consultative Committee was due to be convened in October 2012 and that the proposals to revise the policy were likely to be the subject of discussion.

RESOLVED:

that further consideration of the draft disciplinary policy be deferred until after the forthcoming meeting of the Employees Joint Consultative Committee.

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

None.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm

M BUTT
Chair