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LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Thursday 28 March 2013 at 7.00 pm

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

Also present: Councillors Chohan, Jones, Mitchell Murray and Pavey

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Beswick, Brown and Hirani

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

None declared.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2013 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

None.

4. **Order of business**

RESOLVED:

that the order of business be changed to take early in the meeting the report on realigning corporate and business support.

5. **One Council Project - Realigning Corporate and Business Support**

The Director of Legal and Procurement introduced the report which described the aims of the project designed to realign Corporate and Business Support relating to administrative/business functions and also specialist/professional support functions. The aim was to, integrate flexible and operational arrangements, streamline and standardise policies maximise benefits for the new Civic Centre and achieve savings. The new staffing model of business support organisation, management and delivery would to be in place by end March 2013 and the operational framework completed by end June 2013. The Director of Legal and Procurement explained that the proposals would result in some redundancies for

internal staff, 15 of which would be compulsory, and the reduced use of agency staff. The new service would be fit for purpose and increase service flexibility.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report from the Director of Legal and Procurement noted and approval given to the thirty seven redundancies that result from the reorganisation and reduction of the council's business support and corporate services staffing levels;
- (ii) that it be noted that of the thirty seven redundancies, twenty two are voluntary redundancies and fifteen are compulsory redundancies.

6. Deputation - restructuring the senior management of the Council

The committee heard from Martin Francis who stated that as a former headteacher and school governor, he was concerned about the proposals in the senior management restructuring report from the interim Chief Executive due to be considered later in the meeting. He felt that to create an Education, Health and Social Care Department brought together a number of high risk budgets and increased the likelihood problems in the future. He reminded the committee that education and social care were brought together following recommendations in the 2003 Government report 'Every Child Matters' to improve safeguarding and relations between the services and with some success. Mr Francis felt the proposals would weaken this link and also referred to the 2011 Munroe Review of child protection which cautioned against overloading service departments with additional responsibilities. While the department would be headed by a strategic director, Martin Francis put that problems would be dealt with at an operational level. Additionally schools needed strong leadership and a critical friend particularly as the school improvement service had been downsized and also the introduction of Free Schools and Academies.

7. Restructuring the senior management of the Council

The report from the Interim Chief Executive referred to the major staffing restructure exercise carried out in 2010 to meet financial challenges and prepare for the move to the new Civic Centre. The 2010 restructuring had also resulted in a substantial downsizing of management posts going a considerable way to achieving a more streamlined and integrated organisation. The Interim Chief Executive, Christine Gilbert, introduced her report which set out the need for further structural change in the light of increased funding pressures on public services. She outlined the proposals which included four core directorates, a chief financial officer and assistant director to the Chief Executive. She responded to the points made earlier in the meeting by Martin Francis and acknowledged that children and adult social care were high risk areas and assured that the strategic director would have a thorough knowledge of issues.

Members raised a series of questions on the report including the role of the Chief Executive under the proposals, the need for an Assistant Chief Executive and to what extent the role differed from the current head of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement. Also questioned were the inclusion of arts and libraries under Education instead of environmental services, bringing together education, health

and social care and the need for 10 Executive members. Another view was expressed that strong leadership for schools could be achieved under the proposed arrangements.

Christine Gilbert responded that the role of Chief Executive remained as it was, a statutory position, head of paid service and, with other directors, would be the front face of the organisation. The Assistant Chief Executive would be key to discussions with directors. She added that the structure could be reviewed in two to three years' time and that the position of lead members was not a subject for this report.

Members drew attention to the appendix to the report and the draft proposals for senior managers' salaries seeking clarification of the ratio between the lowest and the highest as recently discussed at Full Council on 25 February 2013 under the council's pay policy statement. Cara Davani (Interim Head of People and Development) set out the current position in the light of further market research and the committee was advised that any significant difference between the Full Council decision and members' intention would be reported to Full Council.

On departmental titles, a view was expressed that the name of the Education, Health and Social Care department should reflect the local authority's partnership with schools and other agencies. Additionally, that for the Regeneration and Major Project department, consideration should be given placing an emphasis on economic development given the importance of incentivising growth and employment. Some concern was expressed at the proposal to bring back together transport delivery and transport planning which had been split in the past, however, the new opportunities to break down departmental silos were welcomed. In response to an enquiry, Cara Davani stated that a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment was being undertaken.

Reference was made to the significant changes taking place within the Corporate Management Team and how institutional memory would be retained and culture maintained. Additionally, questions were raised on the impact on the project of the absence of a permanent chief executive, progress on the recruitment to that post and the provision of legal and financial advice to the new corporate management team. The Interim Chief Executive stated that work would take place with remaining teams to carve out a clear sense of direction and give confidence. On the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive, the committee heard that a contract for a recruitment company was being drafted and an advertisement was being prepared. The Corporate Management Team would call on legal and financial advice when required. On transportation, members heard that the suggestion had come from the team and would be considered as part of the consultation process.

Councillor Butt reminded the committee of the financial pressures on the council and the need to review the senior staffing structure. A robust approach was being adopted to achieve a service that was fit for purpose.

Andy Potts (Legal Services) drew attention to the omission from recommendation 2.7 of the report of the resultant deletion of the post of Director of Legal and Procurement which was agreed.

The committee also had before it an appendix to the report which was not for publication as it related to the following category of exempt information specified in

Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: "Information relating to any individual" and "Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual".

RESOLVED:

- (i) that subject to staff consultation, approval be given to the deletion of the Finance and Corporate Services Department, the Customer and Community Engagement Department, the Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement Department and the reallocation of their functions as set out in section 4 of the report from the Interim Chief Executive;
- (ii) that agreement be given to the creation of the Education, Health and Social Care Department as set out in section 4 of the report;
- (iii) that the statutory roles of Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Social Services be undertaken by either the Strategic Director or the relevant Operational Director in the Education, Health and Social Care department;
- (iv) that approval be given to the creation of the Governance and Corporate Services Department as set out in section 4 of the report;
- (v) that agreement be given to the changes to the Regeneration and Major Projects Department as set out in section 4 of this report;
- (vi) that the changes to the Environment and Neighbourhood Services Department as set out in section 4 of the report be agreed;
- (vii) that agreement be given to the deletion of the posts of Director of Finance and Corporate Services, the Director of Customer and Community Engagement, the Director of Strategy Partnerships and Improvement, the Assistant Director, Corporate Policy, the Assistant Director, One Council Programme and the Director of Legal and Procurement subject to staff consultation where appropriate, although it is recognised that some post holders may wish to waive their rights to consultation in the event of voluntary redundancy being pursued;
- (viii) that agreement be given to the creation of the posts of Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance, Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Chief Executive, with the functional responsibilities for these posts described in section 4, subject to staff consultation;
- (ix) that the impact of the proposed structural changes on affected staff set out in appendix 2 be noted;
- (x) that the Interim Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make such other changes as may be needed to give effect to the proposals in this report.

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

None.

9. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

M BUTT
Chair

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