

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 11 February 2020

Present:

Councillor Pauline Tunnicliffe (Chairman)
Councillor Stephen Wells (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Vanessa Allen, Aisha Cuthbert, Judi Ellis,
Robert Evans, Kira Gabbert, Josh King,
Christopher Marlow, Russell Mellor, Keith Onslow,
Neil Reddin FCCA, Melanie Stevens, Harry Stranger and
Michael Turner

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur and Councillor Nicholas Bennett
MA J.P.

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Allatt, Owen and Cooke.
Councillors Onslow, Ellis and Cuthbert attended as their respective
substitutes.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Melanie Stevens.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

53 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions were received.

54 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 6TH AND 28TH NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 6th and 28th
November 2019, be confirmed.

Matters Arising

Annual Complaints Report – the Chairman reported that she had been in
contact with the Chairmen of the PDS Committees regarding any concerns
they may have with complaints procedures. To date, one response had been
received from the Chairman of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS

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Committee. The Chairman would follow up with the remaining PDS Chairmen and would report back at the next meeting.

Audit of Financial Statements 2018/19 – At the request of the Chairman the Assistant Director for Strategic Property attended the meeting to provide an update on the issues relating to asset valuations. The Assistant Director reported that the Council was still waiting for Cushman and Wakefield to provide all the required information. The Assistant Director informed the Committee that following a meeting with Cushman and Wakefield earlier in the day, assurances had been received that answers to the final questions would be provided on 12th February 2020. Members noted that there was a significant amount of background work being undertaken, however the information required to update the accounts could not be provided to the Council's Finance Department until what was referred to as the "Master Spreadsheet" had been received.

In relation to the questions that had been raised as objections to the accounts, the Chief Accountant reported that one individual had objected to the last 3 years accounts. The Committee noted that the objections relating to 2016/17 and 2017/18 were over 90 pages in total, containing a large number of questions. The Chief Accountant explained that it was not possible for the Council's new external auditors to deal with the objection for 2018/19 until the issues with the previous two years' objections had been addressed. Members noted that the external auditors had been provided with answers to the questions but had themselves in turn further questions and requests for additional detail which required response. The Council had provided all of the requested information and was now waiting for the external auditors to respond.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management reiterated that the current situation with regard to asset valuation was hugely frustrating for everyone and had arisen as a result of a number of factors. The Portfolio Holder reported that the majority of the work had now been completed and by identifying what remained outstanding it should be possible for the Council to receive the information that was required on 12th February.

The Chairman thanked all those involved for the additional work they had been undertaking in attempting to secure a satisfactory resolution for the Council. It was agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be kept updated on the progress of the ongoing work with Cushman and Wakefield. The Committee requested that Cushman and Wakefield attend the most appropriate Committee (be it General Purposes and Licensing or Executive Resources and Contracts PDS Committee) to discuss this matter.

RESOLVED: That Cushman and Wakefield attend the most appropriate Committee (be it General Purposes and Licensing or Executive Resources and Contracts PDS Committee) to discuss the issues with regard to asset valuation.

**55 FEEDBACK ON THE 2019 UK PARLIAMENTARY (GENERAL)
ELECTION
Report CSD20031**

The Committee were advised on the key issues relating to the UK Parliamentary (General) Election held on Thursday 12 December 2019.

The Mayor, Councillor Nicolas Bennett, in his capacity of Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Election, explained that he had formally received the writ, however the practical arrangements for the election had been undertaken by the Acting Returning Officer and the Elections Team. The Mayor informed the Committee that on polling day he had visited 30 different polling places (approximately 50 polling stations) and had been impressed by the staff in all stations.

Polling day itself had been wet and windy which had provided additional challenges and had resulted in muddy conditions in some polling places. The Mayor noted that further consideration should be given to the deployment of hay bales at polling places where muddy footpaths could be an issue in order to improve the overall voter experience. Members also noted that the poor weather conditions had an impact on polling station signage and it was suggested that consideration should be given to laminating signage or investigating other longer lasting and weatherproof options such as correx boards.

The Mayor also suggested that consideration should be given to reviewing whether it would be possible to speed up the counting process, noting that the results for the Beckenham Constituency were declared at 4.15am.

Members also noted that a small number of overseas electors had not been able to return their vote in time. In response, the Director of Corporate Services (Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Election) advised that Postal Votes were despatched in good time (as far as possible within the confines of the election timetable). It had to be recognised that absent voters had the option of either a postal vote or a proxy vote and where late applications were made for a postal vote electors were advised of their right to appoint a proxy.

Members also noted that with regard to roadworks near polling stations, the Elections Team worked closely with colleagues in the Highways Department to avoid inconvenience to voters however where roadworks were commissioned by TfL or utility companies, the Elections Team had little or no influence and control.

The Committee noted that the Returning Officer was under no obligation to count votes on a ward basis. For Parliamentary Elections, postal votes were issued for the constituency. The returned postal votes were then distributed across the wards within the constituency for the purposes of the count. It was recognised that these postal votes would distort the ward figures to some extent but this was unavoidable.

The Director of Corporate Services agreed to provide a Member with details of the total number of postal votes issued for Lewisham West and Penge Wards administered by Bromley Council.

In response to a question from a Member concerning different operational requirements in Lewisham Wards in respect of publishing hourly turnout figures, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the Lewisham Returning Officer had not required staff working in the Lewisham West and Penge Polling Stations serviced by LB Bromley to published hourly turnout figures.

The Committee thanked the Acting Returning Officer and the Elections Team for the delivery of a well organised election and noted that the Team had now commenced preparation for the London Mayoral Election in May 2020 – the third election this year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

56 2020/21 PAY AWARD

Under the local terms and conditions of employment framework, the Committee was required to make a recommendation on the annual staff pay award to Full Council. The pay award review was now part of the Council's budget planning process - this was a key driver for coming out of the national/regional pay negotiating frameworks.

The Chairman noted that when taken alongside the other incentives and benefits offered, the proposed 2.5% pay award represented a good deal for staff. The Committee also noted that at the current time the national offer was 2%.

Councillor Allen expressed disappointment that the offer meant that some of the lower grades fell below the London Living Wage. In response, the Director of Human Resources emphasised that there was no statutory requirement to pay the London Living Wage. It had to be recognised that Bromley pay across all grades was above the statutory national minimum wage and it was felt that the range of salaries on offer attracted the right calibre of talent to the Council.

In response to a question concerning the request made by the Unions for a review of workforce stress, the Director of Human Resources noted that figures relating to workforce stress had previously been reported. The figures were low and also notably included non-work stress. In recent years, Bromley Council had been at the forefront of employee mental health and wellbeing by introducing initiatives such as Mental Health First Aiders and Employee Stress and Resilience Seminars. The Committee noted that there were a number of measures in place across the Council to support employee mental health and wellbeing and the issue was taken seriously.

RESOLVED that

- 1. Full Council be recommended to approve the following:**
 - (i) A flat 2.5% pay increase for all staff (excluding teachers who are covered by a separate statutory pay negotiating process)**
 - (ii) The removal of the equivalent of spinal points 4-8 (affecting BR1, BR2 and BR3 grades) with assimilation to equivalent of spinal point 9 (BR3).**
 - (iii) The introduction of a 4p electric car lease mileage rate for business mileage**
 - (iv) That the Trade Union's pay claim for staff be rejected (see para 3.7 below and attached Appendices)**
- 2. Members note that, as in the previous years since coming out of the nationally/regionally negotiated frameworks, Bromley staff will receive the 2020/21 pay increase in time for the April pay.**

57 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21

Under the Localism Act 2011 the Council was required to publish a Pay Policy Statement which must be approved by Full Council every year.

In response to a question concerning the Chief Executive's appraisal of his Chief Officers, the Director of Human Resources confirmed that Chief Officer appraisals were conducted by the Chief Executive and included feedback from Lead Members. Each Chief Officer had discussions with the Chief Executive and were set their own individual targets.

RESOLVED that Full Council be recommended to approve the 2020/21 Pay Policy Statement.

**58 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2020/21
Report CSD20005**

The regulations governing Members' Allowances required that, before the beginning of each financial year, the Council should make a scheme of allowances for that year, and the report detailed the proposed allowances for 2019/20. The allowances had remained frozen since 2009 due to the economic circumstances and the pressure on the Council's budgets, and most Members considered that it was now reasonable to allow an increase. The Chairman noted in particular that the allowances for the Leader and Portfolio Holders were considerably below the levels recommended by the 2018 London Councils Independent Panel recommendation.

The Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Allowances were not part of the scheme, but were usually considered in conjunction with it.

The Chairman read out the following statement:

“The report suggests that if Members are minded to increase the allowances, then a reasonable guide would be that they increase in line with the proposed increase to staff salaries (2.5%).

In addition, the Majority Group propose to increase the Leader’s Allowance to £40,000 to reflect average parity with other London Boroughs and to reflect the extent of responsibility, pressures and competencies required for the job. It is proposed that the Leaders of the Opposition parties will receive the same percentage increase as the Leader.

The additional cost is £10.7k pa, which can be found from within existing budgets.”

The following amended recommendation was proposed:

“That Council be recommended to approve the Members Allowances Scheme 2020/21 and the Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Allowances, on the basis of a 2.5% increase in all allowances, in line with the recommended increase for Council staff, with the allowance for the Leader of the Council increased to £40,000 and the allowances for the Leaders of the minority groups increased by similar percentages to £9,333 and £4,667.”

Councillor Allen reported that the Labour Group on the Council had not intended to support the raising of Member Allowances and certainly would not support the amended recommendation. Councillor King noted that if Member allowances were not raised in this way, the £10,700 saved could be used to fund the extra 15p for staff whose salaries fell below the London Living Wage.

Other members of the Committee noted the importance of ensuring that Members Allowances kept pace with increases in average earnings. In respect of the Special Responsibility allowance for the Leader, it was noted that the role came with significant personal responsibility and if it were an industry based role the remuneration would be significantly higher. Members noted that if allowances were set too low, a large number of people would be deterred from seeking elected office and in particular post holders with special responsibilities would be restricted to individuals who were either retired or those who were independently wealthy and would not represent a broad cross section of the residents represented by the Council. It was also noted that the allowances were an indication of the level required for the post and individuals were able to choose whether or not they claimed the allowance.

The proposed recommendations were put to the vote:

In favour 13
Against 2

The motion was therefore CARRIED

RESOLVED that Council be recommended to approve the Members Allowances Scheme 2020/21 and the Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Allowances, on the basis of a 2.5% increase in all allowances, in line with the recommended increase for Council staff, with the allowance for the Leader of the Council increased to £40,000 and the allowances for the Leaders of the minority groups increased by similar percentages to £9,333 and £4,667.

**59 EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20
Report CSD20006**

As part of its consideration of the Members Allowances Scheme, the Committee received reports from the Executive Assistants appointed by the Leader for 2018/19. These reports were intended to illustrate the work undertaken by Executive Assistants, who were in receipt of an annual special responsibility allowance of £3,575.

Members thanked the Executive Assistants for their interesting and insightful reports, noting that the reports were a clear demonstration of the harnessing of individual's talents. The Committee noted that the reports demonstrated the very high standards being set by the current posts holders and the talent that was available in the Council for delivering a range of initiatives that were having a positive impact across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the reports from the Executive Assistants be noted.

**60 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2020/21
Report CSD20007**

The Committee considered the proposed Programme of Meetings 2020/21. The programme broadly followed previous years, and assumed no changes to the various committees and sub-committees that would be appointed by Members at the Annual Council meeting.

The Committee noted the date of the summer SACRE meeting had been moved to 24th June 2020 (from 8th July 2020).

The Chairman stressed the importance of keeping to the agreed Programme of Meetings as much as possible throughout the Municipal Year and to this end requested that changes be kept to a minimum and where possible agreed prior to Annual Council in May 2020.

RESOLVED that

(1) Subject to any changes of meeting arrangements subsequently approved by Members, the Programme of Meetings for 2020/21 be agreed.

(2) The Director of Corporate Services be authorised to adjust the programme in accordance with any changes made to committees by

Members, and to make minor corrections to the programme as necessary.

**61 LOCAL PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
Report FSD20013**

The Local Pension Board Terms of Reference require that an Annual Report is produced and provided to the Pensions Manager each year and referred to Full Council for consideration (via the General Purposes and Licensing Committee).

RESOLVED that the Local Pensions Board Annual Report be noted.

**62 WORK PROGRAMME AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING
Report CSD20008**

The report summarised the Committee's role and set out the Committee's proposed dates and work programme for the 2019/20 Council year.

It was noted that a further update on the asset valuation would be provided at the meeting on 18 May 2020.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**63 AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
ON 17 OCTOBER 2019, EXCLUDING EXEMPT INFORMATION**

The draft minutes from the Audit Sub- Committee held on 17 October 2019, excluding exempt information, were received.

**64 PENSIONS INVESTMENT SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE
MEETINGS HELD ON 3RD AND 17TH DECEMBER 2019,
EXCLUDING EXEMPT INFORMATION**

The draft minutes from the Pension Investment Sub- Committee meetings held on 3rd and 17th December 2019, excluding exempt information, were received.

**65 APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS
HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2019 AND 10TH JANUARY 2020,
EXCLUDING EXEMPT INFORMATION**

The draft minutes from the Appeal Sub- Committee meetings held on 19th November 2019 and 10th January 2020, excluding exempt information, were received.

66 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006 AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business referred to below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

**67 PENSION FUND TRIENNIAL VALUATION
Report FSD20025**

The report included matters relating to the 2019 actuarial valuation for Bromley's Pension Fund. The report requested that Members note the outcome of the actuarial report, including the fully funded position which now applied and the changes in future service contribution which reflected the McCloud judgement. The changes had been reflected in the Draft 2020/21 Budget.

RESOLVED that the outcome of the Triennial Valuation be noted.

68 AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE: EXEMPT MINUTES - 17 OCTOBER 2019

The draft exempt minutes from the Audit Sub- Committee held on 17 October 2019, were received.

69 PENSIONS INVESTMENT SUB-COMMITTEE: EXEMPT MINUTES - 3RD DECEMBER 2019

The draft exempt minutes from the Pension Investment Sub- Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2019, were received.

70 APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE: EXEMPT MINUTES - 19TH NOVEMBER 2019 AND 10TH JANUARY 2020

The draft exempt minutes from the Appeal Sub- Committee meetings held on 19th November 2019 and 10th January 2020, were received.

The Meeting ended at 8.06 pm

Chairman