

Decisions of the General Functions Committee

12 October 2015

Members Present:-

Councillor Joan Scannell (Chairman)
Councillor Wendy Prentice (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Tom Davey
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor Alison Moore

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley
Councillor Barry Rawlings

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Richard Cornelius
Councillor Kathy Levine

Councillor Daniel Thomas

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Richard Cornelius (substituted by Councillor Tom Davey)
- Councillor Kathy Levine (substituted by Councillor Alison Moore)
- Councillor Daniel Thomas (substituted by Councillor David Longstaff).

3. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Joan Scannell declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 7 (Local Pension Board – Recruitment Update) being a member of the local government pension scheme and agenda item 9 (Approval of premises for Weddings and Civil Partnership Registrations at Allianz Park) being a Saracens rugby season ticket holder.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None

5. PUBLIC QUESTION AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None

6. MEMBERS ITEM (IF ANY)

None

7. LOCAL PENSION BOARD - RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Head of Governance (Assurance Group) presented the report which outlined the process of recruiting to the Local Pension Board and confirmed its current membership. The Committee was advised that an expression of interest had been received from a member of the Assurance Group in respect of a vacancy for a substitute employee representative (active member). Recruitment to the position would be progressed with an interview. Having a managerial connection to the candidate, the Head of Governance would not partake in the appointment process.

RESOLVED to note the recruitment process and appointments to the Local Pension Board as set out in Appendix A to the report.

8. VACANCIES ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The Head of Governance (Assurance Group) presented the report. Political group nominations were circulated to the Committee.

The Committee discussed the difficulties in identifying candidates who were prepared to serve as local authority governors. The Committee expressed concern that some governing bodies had refused to appoint candidates nominated by the Council. The Committee feared that valuable contribution from experienced candidates could be lost if governing bodies focused on addressing a narrow skills specification. Members questioned whether governing bodies were giving sufficient consideration to a candidate's ability and willingness to develop as a school governor as a way of meeting their skills gap.

The Committee also identified inconsistencies in the number of schools electing to express a preference for particular skills/experience. The Head of Governance explained that in light of significant legislative changes to the constitution of school governing bodies (as detailed in the report) the Governance Team had commenced a project to review the nomination and appointment process. It was reported that the project endeavoured to ensure compliance with legislation, together with government guidance, and optimise the efficiency and reliability of the systems in operation.

The Committee questioned whether the council had corresponded with school governing bodies regarding the implications of legislative changes after the Council Meeting in July 2015 as things had gone wrong for our nominees. The Head of Governance undertook to ascertain the extent of any communication and report back to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to defer any further nominations pending receipt of this together with the project summary report at its next meeting.

RESOLVED to defer nominations to vacancies on school governing bodies pending receipt of this and consideration of a project summary report at the next General Functions Committee meeting.

9. APPROVAL OF PREMISES FOR WEDDINGS AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP REGISTRATIONS: ALLIANZ PARK, GREENLANDS LANE, HENDON, LONDON, NW4 1RL

The Committee received a report in the name of the Proper Officer for Registration. The report sought determination of an application for Allianz Park (NW4 1RL) to be licensed as a venue for marriages and civil partnership registrations in accordance with legislation outlined in the report.

RESOLVED to approve the application for Allianz Park to be an approved premises for the solemnisation of marriages and civil partnerships for a period of three years in accordance with legislation outlined in the report.

10. APPROVAL OF PREMISES FOR MARRIAGES AND THE FORMATION OF CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

The Committee received a report in the name of the Proper Officer for Registration. The report sought an amendment to the constitutional scheme of delegations, namely, to authorise the Proper Officer for Registration to determine applications for venues to be licensed for marriages and civil partnership registrations. The report suggested that the delegated authority would enable a more efficient process and thus support the growth of business in the borough.

The Committee discussed how this council function had previously been exercised and decided not to approve the recommendation in the report and to retain responsibility for such applications.

RESOLVED that the General Functions Committee maintain responsibility for the approval of premises for marriages and civil partnership registrations in accordance with the Marriage Act 1949, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, and the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005.

11. COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC BY TEXT AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Committee received a report in the name of the Head of Information Management. The report requested the Committee's comments on the Communications with the Public by Text and Social Media Policy which was in place for Council employees.

The Committee asked for an explanation of section 6.2 of the policy, specifically, when and why it would be appropriate to communicate outside of the traditional methods of telephone and email correspondence. With reference to section 6.6 of the policy, the Committee questioned the use of Business Skype by council officers, particularly licence arrangements, software security, safeguarding responsibilities and the cost involved. The Committee requested that the Information Strategy Manager address these matters in preparation for the next Committee meeting.

The Committee suggested that reference to 'Barnet councillors' should be removed from the scope of the policy (page 7) to maintain a clear delineation in its application to council employees only. The Committee further suggested that the Members' Information Management Policy could be amended to incorporate guidance on communications via social media. It was acknowledged that the three roles of an elected member (explained in section 3 of the Members' Information Management Policy) could be used to

demonstrate the context within which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies to members' communications through social media.

The Committee noted that there was no director or senior officer present from Information Management Team and requested that someone attend the next meeting to answer its queries.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That section 3 of the Communications with the Public by Text and Social Media Policy be amended to remove the reference to 'Barnet councillors'.**
- 2. To request the Information Strategy Manager to present a further report incorporating the Committee's recommendations at the November General Functions Committee meeting.**
- 3. That a report with guidance about councillors' communication with the public via social media be considered at the November General Functions Committee meeting.**

12. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016-17 AND 2017-18

The Head of Governance presented the report. The Committee was asked to comment on and approve the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal years 2016-17 and 2017-18.

The Committee expressed concern that in some circumstances the calendars included considerable gaps between meetings. It was acknowledged, however, that where the business of the Committee necessitated, additional meetings could be held with the agreement of the relevant Chairman and the change reported to Full Council. The Committee requested that every effort be made to preserve the published Full Council meeting dates to enable all councillors to plan their attendance accordingly.

The Head of Governance undertook to check that the scheduled budget meetings of the Full Council facilitated compliance with the legislative time constraints applicable to the Council's duty to set the council tax. The Head of Governance further agreed to check the October 2017 Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting date did not conflict with political group conferences.

The Committee expressed the view that it was desirable for the calendar of meetings for the year be agreed in advance of Annual Council. This would aid decision-making by enabling all stakeholders to forward plan decisions required by Council Committees and therefore contribute to the efficient administration of the council.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To request the Head of Governance to check that the scheduled budget meetings of the Full Council facilitate compliance with the legislative time constraints applicable to the council's duty to set the council tax.**
- 2. To request that the Head of Governance check the October 2017 Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting date does not conflict with political group Party Conferences.**

3. **Subject to (1) and (2) above, to approve the calendar of meetings 2016-17 and 2017-18 (attached as Appendix A and B to the report) and to recommend it to Full Council.**
4. **To agree that the Chairman authorise any further amendments to the calendar of meetings 2016-17 and 2017-18 in advance of its consideration at Full Council.**
5. **To note that in accordance with the constitution, formal adoption of the calendar of meetings 2016-17 and 2017-18 will be reserved to Annual Council on 24 May 2016.**
6. **That subject to (5) above, the Head of Governance be authorised to facilitate variations to the calendars, following consultation with the Chairman of the General Functions Committee, together with political group leaders.**

13. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16

The Head of Governance presented the report. The Committee was asked to consider and comment on the work programme for the municipal year 2015-16.

The Committee thought it would be useful to review the work programme at each meeting.

RESOLVED to agree the work programme at each meeting.

14. ANY ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES IS URGENT

The Chairman agreed to receive two appointments to vacancies on outside bodies as late and urgent items. The appointments fell within the Committee's terms of reference and required a decision before the next scheduled Council and General Functions Committee meetings.

(i) Fostering Panel

It was reported that an opposition member vacancy existed on the Fostering Panel following the resignation of Councillor Paul Edwards. The Committee understood that the appointed representative must be a Labour Group member of the council appointed for the remainder of the original appointment period.

The Labour Group Secretary, Councillor Ammar Naqvi, had nominated Councillor Zakia Zubairi as the Labour Group representative on the Fostering Panel.

The uncontested nomination was moved, duly seconded, put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the General Functions Committee appoint Councillor Zakia Zubairi to the Fostering Panel until 16 December 2017.

(ii) North London Waste Authority

It was reported that there were two vacancies arising on the North London Waste Authority following the resignation of Councillor Richard Cornelius and Councillor Daniel Thomas (with effect from 20 October 2015).

The Conservative Group Secretary, Councillor Joan Scannell, had nominated Councillor Dean Cohen and Councillor Peter Zinkin to be appointed for the remainder of the original appointment period.

The uncontested nominations were moved, duly seconded, put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the General Functions Committee appoint Councillor Dean Cohen and Councillor Peter Zinkin to the North London Waste Authority (with effect from 20 October 2015) until 23 May 2016.

The meeting finished at 7.45pm