

**Friday 5th April 2024**

[By email only]

Re: GMB Motion on London Weighting

Dear Mr Boff,

Thank you for sharing your concerns with me regarding the disparity in London Weighting paid to teaching and support staff across the London Borough of Brent. I share your frustration at the discrepancy between pay and remuneration of teachers and support staff.

Teachers and our support staff are the lifeblood of our Brent family of schools. It is through them that we have achieved such record levels of pupil attainment; and I am proud that our schools are now rated as 97% 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. As you will no doubt be aware from your work as an Assembly Member, there are many structural issues facing our schools today, unfortunately with a clear red line back to successive inadequate funding settlements from central government.

In Brent, 74% of schools are projecting an in-year deficit, and of these schools nearly half expect to use over 50% of their reserves to legally balance their budgets. Clearly the financial situation is untenable for staff and is a distraction from the primary art of education. We would welcome any attention you can bring from your party nationally to unlock additional funding at the next financial settlement.

The issues you have highlighted pertain primarily due to the differences in national terms and conditions of employment. In Brent, support staff in schools are paid in accordance with the NJC pay scale (where London Weighting is paid as an additional allowance), or the GLPC pay scale (where the London Weighting allowance is incorporated in the pay scale). Most Brent schools have chosen the NJC pay scale where London Weighting is paid as a separate amount. Support staff are paid on the Outer London Weighting allowance and once national pay negotiations conclude later this year, every single member of our support staff will be paid a London Living Wage, if they are not already in receipt of one.

The position for teachers is different to that of support staff in schools, as teachers' pay is regulated by Parliament under the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). The STPCD sets out the pay scales for teachers nationally; and those which apply to teachers working in London are split into two consolidated pay scales which incorporate the London Weighting allowance i.e., Inner London Area and Outer London Area. Under the STPCD set by Parliamentarians, Brent is deemed to be inner London.

If Brent were to accept the GMB motion to support the standardisation of London weighting, this would have to be via local agreement with schools. Given the delegated authority within schools, this could not be imposed by Brent as the local authority. Regrettably academies and voluntary aided schools fall under this same category and would not be bound by any agreement we make.

The recruitment and retention of teaching and support staff has never been harder during this cost-of-living crisis – with public sector workers priced out of living in London. While Brent Council has led the way with Keyworker accommodation through our housing company, Invest 4 Brent, clearly more financial incentives are needed from central government if London is to remain a viable and affordable option for newly qualified teachers and support staff.

It is for this reason that I am in support of Labour's New Deal for Working People. Boosting workers income is not just the right thing to do after years of stagnation – but it is also the right thing for our economy. Better financial settlements to allow pay to increase would end the self-defeating low wage, low investment, and low productivity cycle that the country has been trapped in for the last decade. It will also help to tackle the cost-of-living crisis by ensuring everyone, including teachers and support staff have enough pay to live on.

If Brent did wish to provide support for the motion, schools will understandably want assurance that additional funding would be made available to fund any changes. After a decade of austerity, Brent schools are managing significant deficits, with per pupil spending been cut by at least £883 per student: clearly any additional burden (however laudable) would risk the financial stability of our schools themselves.

Finally, I am also mindful of the implications of supporting a motion that could be seen as compounding inequity amongst public sector workers. I would remind you that Brent Council employees themselves, over two thousand of them, receive a GLPC Outer London Weighting allowance. In an ideal world where the contributions of public sector workers were valued and weighed more accurately by national government, every worker in our borough would be remunerated with that in mind.

Thank you again for writing to me. I welcome any wider regional and national collaboration you can bring on the issue to standardise pay and remuneration arrangements and unlock the additional funding to make this issue a reality.

Yours sincerely,



CLLR MUHAMMED BUTT

Leader of Brent Council

Copied to:

Krupesh Hirani, Assembly Member for Brent and Harrow.

Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader.

Cllr Gwen Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools.