

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 15 June 2023.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chair), Mrs S Prendergast (Vice-Chairman), Mrs S Chandler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R C Love, OBE (Substitute for Mrs C Bell), Mr P J Oakford, Mr D Robey, Mr C Simkins and Dr L Sullivan

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Royel (Director of HR & OD), Ms D Christie (Head of Engagement and Consultation), Mr I Allwright (Employment Policy Manager), Mrs J Clayton (HR & OD Manager) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

55. Membership

(Item 1)

RESOLVED that the Membership be noted.

56. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.

(Item 3)

Dr Sullivan declared her Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, as her husband was employed by the County Council. There were no specific items on this agenda that would require her to withdraw from the meeting or decision making.

57. Minutes - 8 March 2023

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

58. Employee Relations Casework Activity

(Item 5)

1. Jane Clayton introduced this report which set out employee relations case work activity for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
2. The number of cases being managed formally was at a similar level to the previous two years.
3. Mrs Clayton responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. In response to a question on bullying and harassment cases there had not been an increase, there was the opportunity to have the process independently reviewed with an opportunity to appeal.

- b. Paul Royel confirmed that if individuals left during a disciplinary process KCC would ensure that they were provided with the right information to see the process through before resignation took effect.
- c. Paul Royel confirmed that if there was a pattern in relation to individuals leaving during disciplinary processes HR & OD would be cognisant of this and would escalate accordingly.
- d. There had been no particular increase in cases of poor performance and ill health. KCC was focusing on improving health and wellbeing interventions. Neurodiversity was becoming more difficult to manage in terms of balancing this against work requirements.
- e. It was confirmed that the numbers of cases were at a level expected of an organisation the size of KCC.
- f. Officers met with the trade unions on a regular basis and also had informal discussions. Trade unions were also involved in the development of policies.

RESOLVED to note the Employees Relations Activity report including senior officer appeals hearings and Employment Tribunal Claims.

59. Annual Workforce Profile Report

(Item 6)

1. Paul Royel introduced this report which provided information from 2022/23 on the staffing levels in the various sectors of the Authority's workforce, together with comparative information from recent years. This information had been presented to Committee in a consistent form for approximately 10 years.
2. Mr Royel responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. The data within the report was provided for Personnel Committee to question and challenge, a further 6-month update report would be provided in November.
 - b. The Pay Award allowed a significant increase and recognition of impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the lowest paid KCC Staff.
 - c. A Member requested consistency of the age bands referred to within the report.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the latest annual workforce profile for 2022-23.

60. People Strategy 2022-2027 Evaluation

(Item 7)

1. Ian Allwright introduced this report which introduced the first-year assessment of the People Strategy, with an indication of activity that had been undertaken within each of the core themes.
2. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:

- a. The question 'would recommend to others' was asked as part of the staff survey.
- b. The questions asked were not binary they were taken from the staff survey and gave a range of reply options.
- c. Benchmarking data was difficult because you were not comparing like for like but this would be done on an informal basis with colleagues across shire counties.
- d. The information was relayed back to staff through presentations to each directorate.
- e. Where there were issues of workload this was being monitored and responded to with action being taken at a local level.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the progress of the People Strategy in its first year and the detailed analysis.

61. Future of Work

(Item 8)

1. Diane Christie gave a presentation to Members on the Future of Work and the opportunities and challenges for work at Kent County Council. This presentation built on the themes and trends shared with committee members in September 2021.

POST MEETING NOTE – this presentation was circulated to Members of the Personnel Committee on 19 June 2023.

2. Ms Christie responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. How did KCC ensure the right balance, given the emphasis on digital and technological advances, between the right skills in terms of ability and social/people skills.
 - b. A Member welcomed this thoughtful and profound presentation and requested that when this was brought back to the committee it also considered skills to take on less work as well as skills to develop careers and workforce.
3. Members requested that this report be brought back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the presentation and ask that Future of Work be brought back to a future meeting.

62. Exclusion of the Press and Public

(Item 9)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open minute of an exempt item)

63. Discretionary Payments

(Item 10)

1. Paul Royel introduced this report which provided an annual update on how discretionary payments had been applied across the organisation for the previous financial year.
2. A Member asked that the business cases for each payment be published, however it was confirmed that many of these contained personal information and that they were managed consistently by HR&OD.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the use of discretionary payments.

Dr Sullivan asked that her dissatisfaction with the report be noted in the minutes.