

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 12 June 2024.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mr P Royel (Director of HR & OD), Ms D Christie (Head of OD and Engagement), Mr I Allwright (People Strategy Manager), Ms J Clayton (HR & OD Manager) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **17. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.** *(Item 2)*

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.

#### **18. Employee Relations Casework Activity** *(Item 3)*

1. Jane Clayton introduced this report which set out employee relations case work activity for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
2. The report provided a comparison of the level of case activity over the last three years and overall the total number of cases that were formally managed during the year had increased slightly from 2022/23. The highest proportion of cases were in CYPE and ASCH Directorates.
3. A Member commented that it might be useful to include the number of cases against the FTE staff within directorates and Mrs Clayton confirmed that this would be considered for inclusion within the next report.

RESOLVED that the report of employee relations activity including senior officer appeals hearings and employment tribunal claims be noted.

#### **19. Annual Workforce Profile Report** *(Item 4)*

1. Paul Royel introduced this report which provided information from 2023-24 on the staffing levels in the various sectors of the Authority's workforce, together with comparative information from recent years.

2. Mr Royel responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:

- a. Members discussed the ideal number of staff reporting directly to one manager. This varied across directorates and was largely dependent on the individual role. It was stated that discussions will be held with the Corporate Management Team on spans and layers and the results of these discussions would be shared with the Personnel Committee.
- b. In relation to sickness levels, this had increased since March 2023 and mostly fell within front line staff, particularly in Adults Social Care and Health. Staff were supported to return to work with input from HR&OD.
- c. There were concerns around the high levels of absence due to mental health issues. It was considered that some of this was due to increasing confidence in declaring mental health conditions to the organisation, however more detail would be provided to the Personnel Committee.
- d. In relation to recruitment KCC was receiving increasing numbers of applications for a reduced number of jobs.

RESOLVED that the Personnel Committee note the latest annual workforce profile for 2023-24.

## **20. People Strategy Evaluation**

*(Item 5)*

1. Ian Allwright introduced this report which set out the second-year assessment of the People Strategy, with an indication of activity that had been undertaken within each of the core themes.
2. Diane Christie gave Members a presentation on The Future of Work and how our People Strategy related to this.
3. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
  - a. Members were pleased to see an increasing recognition of neurodiversity cascading through the organisation. This was echoed by officers.
  - b. The HR business partners worked closely with the directorates to monitor the impact of change on teams.
  - c. In relation to recruitment it was considered that KCC had many competitors for recruiting staff, KCC had worked hard on the employment offer available to attract recruits.
  - d. Thought should be given to an ageing population and how staff could be accommodated at the later stages of their working lives.
  - e. It was also vital to consider the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how this could have the most positive impact on staff at KCC.

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

## **21. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

*(Item 6)*

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, 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

(Open minutes)

#### **22. Discretionary Payments**

*(Item 7)*

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. Mrs Beer and Mr Royel responded to Members' questions.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the use of discretionary payments.

*Dr Sullivan asked that her dissatisfaction with the detail contained within the report be noted in the minutes.*

#### **23. Interim Appointment**

*(Item 8)*

1. Mrs Beer introduced this report which proposed the temporary appointment of a Corporate Director of Finance for a period up to April 2025.
2. Mrs Beer responded to Members' questions including queries around the timescale and that this appointment was to April 2025.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that Personnel Committee agree to appoint John Betts to the role of Corporate Director of Finance for a temporary period up to April 2025.