

## 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 Thursday, 29 January 2026.

PRESENT: Ms L Kemkaran (Chair), Mr M Brice (Substitute for Mr A J Hook), Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr M Ellis, Mrs B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr M Harrison, Mrs S Hudson (Substitute for Mr H Rayner), Mr S Jeffery, Miss D Morton, Ms C Nolan and Mr P Webb

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive), Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs K Hunter (Head of People Strategy) and Mrs A Taylor (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny))

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **14. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 1)*

Apologies had been received from Mr Antony Hook for whom Mr Martin Brice was substituting and Mr Harry Rayner for whom Mrs Hudson was substituting.

#### **15. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.**

*(Item 2)*

Mr Watts stated that as the agenda item related to staff pay everyone in the room had an interest in that officers were directly affected and member allowances were also linked to staff pay.

#### **16. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025 and 27 November 2025**

*(Item 3)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2026 and 27 November 2026 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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

*(Item 4)*

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

## **EXEMPT ITEMS**

(Open minutes)

### **18. Pay Bargaining**

*(Item 5)*

*(Ben Watts, Dave Shipton and Kerena Hunter were present for this item)*

1. Mrs Hunter introduced the report which provided a summary of the position from this year's Local Pay Bargaining process and the implications of the Council's Pay Strategy..
2. Endorsement of the proposed action was requested, prior to approval being sought from County Council in February 2026.
3. Mr Watts, Mr Shipton and Mrs Hunter answered questions of clarification from Members which included the following:
  - a. Mr Shipton assured Members that the recommendation contained within the report was less than the provision set aside in the draft budget.
  - b. In response to a question about the high cost of living in West Kent and whether this had been discussed with the Trade Unions, Mrs Hunter confirmed that discussions to date had not been held on that basis. A report on staffing challenges would be brought to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.
  - c. A Member asked how the discussions had moved from 4.1% as suggested by the Unions to 3.8% as proposed in the report – this was based on CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' Housing costs). CPIH had moved from 4.1% at initial discussion to 3.8% at the time of writing the report.
  - d. Members commented on the balancing exercise between the trust, confidence and retention of staff with the responsibility to the tax payer in Kent and funding for front line services.
  - e. In response to a question about the funding difference between 3.8% and 4.1% this was around £2.5million – a further breakdown would be provided to Members of the Committee.
  - f. A Member asked about the cost to the Council of the National Insurance increase which dated back to April 2025 – this was approximately £10million.
  - g. It was confirmed that the tapering proposals had been discussed with the Trade Unions which were in agreement.

RESOLVED, by majority vote, that Personnel Committee endorses and recommends to County Council:

- A minimum general pay award of 3.8% for all Kent Scheme staff with the corresponding adjustment to pay points, based on KCC's pay principles to shorten the Council's pay scales.
- In recognition of the continued desire to pay at least the equivalent of the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage an increase in our lowest grade to

£13.56 per hour which will maintain our position above the national minimum wage and above the Living Wage for April 2026 (and includes the minimum requirement to satisfy the National Living Wage of £12.71 per hour for employees aged over 21).

*In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution, Ms Nolan asked that it be recorded in the minutes that she voted against the recommendation. Mr Jeffery, Mr Ellis and Mr Brice abstained on the vote.*