

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Online on Tuesday, 10 November 2020.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mrs S Prendergast (Vice-Chairman), Mr M A C Balfour (Substitute for Mr B J Sweetland), Mrs C Bell, Mr R H Bird, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr P W A Lake, Mr P J Oakford and Dr L Sullivan

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Farrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of People and Communications), Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Mrs A Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Mr P Royel (Head of HR & OD)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

112. Membership

(Item 1)

It was noted that Mrs Bell had joined the Committee.

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

(Item 2)

Dr Sullivan declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, as her husband is employed by the County Council in the Early Help and Prevention Team.

Dr Sullivan stated that she would be withdrawing from the meeting for item 8 (Term Time Only Staff) and item 9 (Pay Bargaining).

114. Minutes - 30 January and 19 March 2020

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 30 January and 19 March 2020 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

115. Annual Workforce Profile - update

(Item 4)

(1) Mr Royel introduced the Annual Workforce Profile report which had been updated since it had been presented to members of Personnel Committee at a briefing in June 2020. It provided information on the changes in staffing levels, demographics, and the diversity of Kent County Council's workforce in the six-month period ending 30 September 2020. He reminded Members that the update for the full year 2020/21 would be submitted to the June 2021 meeting of the committee.

(2) Mr Royel replied to questions of detail and noted comments which included the following:

- Mr Royel said the number of staff working from home had increased since March 2020, However, there was no indication within the six month figures of a change in the types of sickness being reported. He undertook to provide some trend information relating to sickness absence and share that with Committee Members.
- Mr Royel clarified that staff from GEN 2 had transferred back to KCC.
- In relation to the small number of people made redundant during this period, Mr Royel stated that they had been provided with the best support possible to help them find alternative work inside and outside of KCC.
- Regarding the reasons listed for staff resignations, Mr Royel stated that to the best of his knowledge this was the list of options available to be selected when managers entered an individual's leaving details.
- The increase in the number of staff moving from part time to full time roles was seen as an indication of better utilisation of existing talented staff. It also reduced recruitment costs.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

116. People Strategy 2017 to 2022

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Royel introduced the third annual update on the 5-year People Strategy which had been agreed by the Committee on 3 July 2017.

(2) Mr Royel replied to questions of detail and noted comments which included the following:

- Mr Royel confirmed that work was ongoing to improve staff awareness of the totality of KCC's benefits package including the provision of an annual benefits statement from Kent Rewards and the local government pension scheme. He said there was a staff perception lag in relation to the data and that it would be interesting to see the impact of the pandemic when the full year's figures were reported. He acknowledged that no matter how good an employment package, the perception among some staff was that they could be better rewarded.
- Whilst pay might be a headline factor in a member of staff considering leaving the organisation, Mr Royel recognised that other factors, such as career pathways and quality of supervision, also had an impact.
- Regarding absence due to stress, Mr Royel highlighted the importance of differentiating between stress that was, and was not, mental health related. In 2019/20 the new employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy offered targeted interventions for stress. This was monitored so that timely interventions could be made by managers to support staff.
- It was acknowledged that there had been an improvement over the last three years but there was still more to be done on the equalisation of the distribution of performance related pay to part time staff. Also BAME staff, although a proportionally smaller group (which could distort the data), had a slightly negative view of the performance management system. This was being raised with these staff groups to help improve this.

- In relation to the impact of the pandemic on recruitment, Mr Royel said there had been an increase in the number of candidates, both in those without qualification and experience but also in those that were well qualified and experienced.
- Mr Royel said the average age of staff was 45 and that it was important to have a balance of younger people and clear career pathways to support staff retention. Mr Royel stated that individuals tended to leave within two or three years of joining KCC or to stay for more than seven years. This was similar to the experience of other local authorities.

(3) RESOLVED that the progress made with delivering the People Strategy be noted.

117. Employee Relations Casework Activity

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Royel introduced an update on employee relations casework activity for the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

(2) Mr Royel replied to questions of detail and noted comments which included the following:

- Mr Royel assured Members that managers were supported to take care of staff during this especially difficult period recognising that people had different stress levels
- In response to a question on the identification of stress in staff, especially related to Covid-19, Mr Royel stated that there were different work related impacts of stress including ill health and reduced performance. Managers were advised and supported to take account of all factors relating to an individual's performance
- Regarding the appeals process associated with disciplinary action, Mr Royel confirmed the meaning of "robust" and confirmed that all factors contributing to a person's performance were taken into account using a standard of reasonableness. He also said that the HR team provided good proportionate and timely advice to managers.

(3) RESOLVED that the report of employee relations activity including senior officer appeal hearings be noted.

118. Introduction of a Shared Cost Salary Sacrifice Additional Voluntary Contribution Scheme

(Item 7)

(1) Mr Royel updated the committee on the implementation of the shared cost AVC scheme, agreed in November 2019, and explained how it fitted within wider work on improving staff financial wellbeing.

(2) RESOLVED that the progress of the shared cost salary sacrifice scheme and continued work on financial wellbeing be noted.

119. Exclusion of the Press and Public

(Item 8)

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 1,2,4 and 5 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open minutes)

120. Term Time Only Staff

(Item 9)

(Mr Farrell was invited to participate in the discussion on this item but took no part in the decision making)

(1) Mr Royel introduced a report which set out details of a legal challenge to the method used for calculating annual leave for staff employed on a term time only basis. He also provided an oral update on the current situation and answered questions on points of clarification

(2) RESOLVED that the report and the update be noted.

(In accordance with her declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dr Sullivan withdrew from the meeting for this item)

121. Pay Bargaining

(Item 10)

(Mr Farrell was invited to participate in the discussion on this item but took no part in the decision making)

(1) Mr Royel introduced a report, which he updated at the meeting and summarised the position on the 2020/21 Local Pay Bargaining process. He confirmed that the principles agreed last year to ensure that the pay structure was sufficiently robust had been incorporated.

(2) It was noted that the outcome of the Local Pay Bargaining process for 2020/21 would be considered at the January meeting of the Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that the principles agreed by the Committee last year and the basis of this year's pay bargaining be noted.

(In accordance with her declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest Dr Sullivan withdrew from the meeting for this item)

122. Update on Top Tier posts

(Item 11)

(Mrs Cooper, Corporate Director GET, was in attendance for the consideration of the proposed top tier realignment in the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate.)

- (1) Mrs Beer updated the report circulated with the agenda which set out a number of issues impacting on top tier posts. She informed Members that Mrs Cooper, Corporate Director GET would be retiring at the end of March 2021.
- (2) The report set out proposals to realign the responsibilities at divisional level in the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate (GET), replacing the three existing director roles at the second tier of that directorate with three new director posts.
- (3) The report asked the committee to consider how the permanent recruitment to the post of Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health should be progressed.
- (4) Mrs Beer updated the committee on progress towards recruiting to the two new director posts in the Children, Young People and Education Directorate. Interview panels for these posts had been arranged for 24 and 25 November 2020.
- (5) Mrs Beer made the Committee aware of a performance issue and the steps that she was proposing to take to address this matter.
- (6) Mrs Beer made the Committee aware of a possible secondment opportunity which was being discussed with the parties involved.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the proposed Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate structure be agreed in principle including:
 - i. the deletion of the posts of Director Highways, Transportation and Waste; Director Economic Development and Director Environment, Planning and Enforcement
 - ii. the introduction of three new directors (Director of Transportation, Director of Environment and Waste and the Director of Growth and Communities).
 - iii. It was noted that a report would be submitted to County Council on 10 December 2020 inviting approval of the proposed structure.
 - iv. subject to County Council approval of the proposed GET structure, the recruitment process should begin immediately assuming no significant change to the proposal is required once the consultation process has been completed.
 - v. an update paper with the full outcome of the consultation process and subsequent outcome of the HR process to identify if there are any "slots" to the new roles be submitted to the January 2021 Personnel Committee meeting.
- (b) A Personnel Member Appointment Panel be convened to consider the appointment of the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in accordance with the limitations agreed by the committee.

- (c) the progress and timetable for the appointment to the roles of Director Education and Director Special Educational Needs and Disabilities be noted.

(In accordance with section 16.31 of the Constitution Dr Sullivan asked that it be recorded that:

- in relation to the decision on the proposed GET structure (Resolution (a) above) she had abstained .*
- in relation to the process of recruiting to the post of Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health (Resolution (b) above) she had voted against the proposed process.*