

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 23 June 2021.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chair), Mrs C Bell, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr P J Oakford, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr C Simkins and Dr L Sullivan

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of People and Communications), Mr P Royel (Head of HR & OD) and Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

2. Membership

(Item 1)

RESOLVED that the Committee membership be noted.

3. Election of Vice-Chair

(Item 3)

1. Mr Oakford proposed and Mr Simkins seconded that Mr Sweetland be elected as Vice-Chair. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Sweetland be elected as Vice-Chair.

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

(Item 4)

No declarations were made.

5. Minutes of meetings held on 26 January 2021 and 27 May 2021

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 26 January and 27 May 2021 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6. Annual Workforce Profile Report

(Item 6)

1. Mr Royel introduced a report which provided information on the staffing levels in the various parts of the Authority's workforce covering the 2020/21 period, along with comparative data from recent years. He highlighted that the focus of the main report was non-school staff. The information also outlined trends and changes in staff levels and work undertaken with those leaving the organisation to better understand reasons. Mr Royel highlighted that the employment by

KCC of staff to support COVID testing centres had impacted on the overall profile.

2. Mr Royel and Mrs Beer responded to a range of questions and comments from Members in relation to workforce demographics, salary banding, reduced sickness levels and staff management arrangements. Members discussed the potential positive impact of remote working for various staff types.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. ER Casework Activity

(Item 7)

1. Mr Royel introduced a report which detailed employee relations casework activity in the 2020/21 period. This covered key issues including highlighting the increasing complexity of cases in recent years and that significant delays in the employment tribunal system had caused inflation of figures for the past year. He commented that the outcomes detailed in the report indicated a healthy organisation that listens and learns.
2. Mr Royel and Mrs Beer responded to questions and noted comments from Members, which included the following:
 - Settlement factors for cases and a request to see aggregated settlement costs.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. Staff Survey

(Item 8)

(Ms Trollope, Head of Engagement and Consultation was in attendance for this item)

1. Diane Trollope introduced the report detailing the processes undertaken for and the outcome of the latest Staff Survey. She highlighted the extensive feedback received via the survey, noting that the word count of free text response amounted to the entire Chronicles of Narnia book series. She explained that the information gathered was analysed and considered by a range of HR specialists with experience from across the organisation.
2. The development of staff attitudes and experiences during the course of the pandemic had been considered and assessed to help KCC understand how different ways of working had impacted on staff and how that should shape future plans.
3. Members thanks Ms Trollope for the presentation and commended the good work involved in the survey and its analysis.
4. Ms Trollope and Mrs Beer answered a range of comments and noted questions from Members including:
 - Ms Trollope confirmed there was limited change between directorates in terms of workload issues highlighted in the survey.

- Reassurance was provided to Members regarding the communications plan to share survey results and to explain actions being taken to address issues highlighted.
- Officers noted comments about some poor staff experiences and explained the process for working with those leaving or considering leaving the organisation.
- It was confirmed that further consideration of longer term strategies building on the survey results would be considered by Personnel at future meetings.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. 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 and 2 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open minutes)

10. Terms & Conditions of Service

(Item 10)

1. Mr Royel introduced the report detailing proposed updates to Terms and Conditions for staff. This report outlined particular updates in relation to flexible working and modernised arrangements to better reflect the current working environment.
2. Key elements highlighted related to managing the shift toward providing a more flexible working system and reviewing some allowances and employment arrangements which predate the embedding of flexible working arrangements. This included reviewing home-worker and car user allowances and considering potential simplification of holiday entitlements.
3. Mr Royel and Mrs Beer answered questions and noted comments from Members, including:
 - Explaining the limited impact of changes to essential car user allowances for the small number of existing legacy user in view of the alternative casual user arrangements.
4. Members discussed the proposals and the explanations provided. Holiday simplification arrangement suggestions were considered with a further report requested for a future meeting. The allowance changes were put to the vote;

RESOLVED to agree;

- a) the removal of the essential user allowance for the legacy recipients and that those remaining essential users convert to casual user status.
- b) the removal of the Home Worker Allowance from the Council's terms and conditions (with those currently in receipt of the allowance to retain it)

11. Discretionary Payments

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Beer introduced the report which set out the different types of discretionary payments paid to staff with explanations as to their frequency, spread across the organisation and their justifications in accordance with KCC's discretionary payment procedures and policies. She advised the Committee that these payments allowed for appropriate recognition of particular responsibilities, gave more flexibility to the organisation and assisted the council in remaining a competitive employer.
2. Mrs Beer responded to questions and comments from Members, including:
 - Clarifying arrangements in relation to payments for senior staff.
 - Explanation of how the role grading system was applied, combined with input from HR advice and exploration of the job market to establish appropriate payment levels.
 - It was confirmed that proximity to London was a factor in the application of some market premium payments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.