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To: Personnel Committee

Date: 28 November 2024

Subject: Recruitment deep dive

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: This paper provides an update on analysis undertaken on KCC's recruitment data of minority groups, in particular ethnic minorities and disabled applicants.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Annual Workforce Profile report was presented to Personnel Committee in November 2023 where a challenge was raised on the recruitment data relating to ethnic minority candidates, in particular the difference in numbers of applications received to those hired. Whilst the initial focus was on ethnicity, a broader review has taken place across protected characteristics with analysis undertaken.
- 1.2 This paper, along with the presentation at Committee will provide greater insight into which factors have the most impact on the likelihood of securing an interview and being hired at KCC. A presentation will be shared at Personnel Committee on 28th November 2024 with further details of the analysis.

2. Background

- 2.1 KCC's strategic statement, Framing Kent's Future, encompasses the organisation's corporate equality objectives, one of which is to achieve a more diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve. Data shows that KCC is recruiting minority ethnic candidates at a higher rate (16.1%) than the existing workforce profile (10.6%) increasing from 9.6% in 2023/24, which is broadly representative of the Kent working age population (11.4%). The overall workforce profile of minority ethnic staff has continued to increase.
- 2.2 Through the delivery of the People Strategy, various activities are taking place to ensure we drive towards a more diverse and inclusive workplace. This includes ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in the way KCC operates to create a workplace where people feel they belong and are able to deliver their best. How KCC is perceived by prospective employees through the employment value proposition and ensuring inclusive recruitment practices all contribute to this aim.

- 2.3 Recruiting managers are expected to attend a suite of Recruitment training which consists of 4 modules, delivered as e-learning and face to face training with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles embedded throughout. Our recruitment policy states that at least two people should conduct an interview and all members of the interview panel are expected to have undertaken the EDI e-learning module in the last two years. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 963 people attended the Module 1 (introductory video/e-learning), 145 attended module 2, 105 attended module 3, and 90 attended module 4 face to face training dates held in this period.
- 2.4 Through the DELTA learning platform, there are a range of additional courses relating to EDI such as unconscious bias, being anti-racist, neurodiversity, allyship etc. that all aim to building understanding and awareness to become a more inclusive workplace. EDI is also embedded into the wider development offer, and guidance available on KNet.

3. Recruitment analysis and findings

- 3.1 The analysis undertaken sought to explain why the conversion rate from interview to hired for ethnic minority applicants was proportionately lower than for white candidates in 2023/2024.
- 3.2 A range of factors were considered as part of the analysis undertaken such as age, location of applicant, internal vs. external applicants, disability, gender, number of applications received for a role, number of applications submitted per applicant as well as ethnicity to build a statistical model looking at the interaction of the different factors on the recruitment process, both at the interview and hired stages. The quality of applications has not been examined as part of this analysis.
- 3.3 Looking at ethnicity as a factor, the deep dive reinforced that there was an over-representation of applications from minority ethnic applicants but a lower proportion of these translated to hires, although minority ethnic new hires remains above the workforce profile and Kent working age population. It also showed that a higher proportion of internal staff from minority ethnic backgrounds applied for a new role compared to white staff, and more internal minority ethnic applicants were successful than external applicants, indicating that they are taking advantage of career progression opportunities which is reflected in other data related to internal movement in KCC. As the profile of KCC staff is less diverse than the external applicant pool, any preference for internal staff appointments will result in a hiring rate that is lower for ethnic minority applicants compared to white.

There was a higher proportion of applications from minority ethnic people living in Kent compared to the working age population, and a small proportion of applications were from people outside of UK. Many applications from people living outside the UK cannot be progressed to offer. This is due to not having the right to work in the UK and inability to sponsor them as a result of Home Office eligibility criteria/associated costs for sponsorship for those eligible. This is a factor in the numbers of minority ethnic people being

interviewed, particularly given that the majority of the applications outside of the UK were from ethnic minority backgrounds equating to approx. 1700 people.

- 3.4 In relation to disability, the data shows that we are hiring at rate that is similar to the rate of applications. As a Disability Confident employer, KCC ensures that disabled applicants are given priority status for an interview and this policy appears to be having an impact on the diversity of new hires. What we know from our review of other data sources is that retention of disabled staff at the early part of their employment with KCC is the area of focus, and is being addressed through the Disability Inclusion action plan.
- 3.5 Whilst the data seemed to indicate that minority ethnic applicants were less likely to be invited for interview, there are other demographic factors at play such as being male or under 35. However, these demographic factors were not the main driver in the likelihood of getting an interview. There was also no evidence of protected characteristics driving the decision to hire once interviewed.
- 3.6 The most significant factor on how likely someone got an interview, based on the statistical analysis, was being an internal rather than external candidate. If someone had applied for over 6 jobs with KCC, it was less likely they would get an interview (potentially due to quality of applications). The other biggest factors were then the number of applications submitted per role (as reduces the chances of being interviewed), and whether someone was living outside of the UK.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Whilst the data highlighted a potential issue in relation to the recruitment of minority ethnic applicants, the analysis has shown there are other significant factors at play beyond demographics that determine success rates in the recruitment process, namely a preference for hiring internal candidates which will result in a lower hiring rate for minority ethnic staff given the current profile.
- 4.2 Beyond this analysis, we know from broader national trends, other organisations' experiences and research that there are other factors such as socio-economic status and higher unemployment where people may be driven to apply for jobs that may not have the relevant experience. This is where qualitative analysis would provide further insights to inform our approach.
- 4.3 The concepts of bias, both conscious and unconscious, are well-known and come into play in many scenarios people face, both in a workplace and in society as a whole. At KCC, we encourage managers and staff, through our development offer, to be more conscious of their biases and how to moderate these, including during a recruitment process.

- 4.4 Blind recruitment is often cited as a solution to address any potential bias at shortlisting stage. Evidence suggests this has limited impact, as if a recruiting manager was consciously biased, this would play out at the interview stage when any visible differences, including ethnicity may be more obvious. Our emphasis has been, and will continue to be, on empowering and trusting managers to make informed decisions and to upskill them on inclusive recruitment practice.
- 4.5 As illustrated in 2.1, our minority ethnic profile continues to improve and is broadly comparable to our community. However, we will continue to review the data on an annual basis to monitor trends and inform any changes required to our policy and practice.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Personnel Committee are asked to note the main findings in the report and supporting slides that will be presented at the meeting.

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