

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 4 March 2025.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chair), Mr A Brady, Mrs S Chandler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr P J Oakford and Mr D Robey

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Christie (Head of OD and Engagement), Ms K Ireland (Internal Communication and Staff Engagement Manager), Mr P Royel (Director of HR & OD) and Mrs A Taylor (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

17. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mrs Bell, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann and Mrs Prendergast.

Mr Lehmann joined the meeting virtually.

With great sadness the Chair informed Members of the death of Mr Charlie Simkins. The Chairman held a one-minute silence in memory of Mr Simkins.

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

(Item 2)

There were none for this meeting.

19. Minutes - 23 January 2025

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair.

20. Staff Survey

(Item 4)

1. Diane Christie introduced this report which set out of the results of the 2024 staff survey and gave a presentation on the survey results to Members of the Committee.
2. 4037 individual responses had been received from across the organisation representing a 40% response rate. The results were stable and provided an opportunity to improve the experience of staff by focusing on specific indicators.

3. Areas of strength related to self-confidence in work, competence and knowledge. Leadership, managing change, career development and pay and benefits were identified as areas needing improvement.
4. Kirsty Ireland updated Members of the Committee on KCC's communication campaigns, emphasising consistent leadership and managing change principles. Work had been undertaken within HR to explore career progression options and to highlight the benefits of working at KCC.
5. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. In relation to bullying and harassment there was a focus of caring about staff and a commitment to inclusion.
 - b. Bullying and harassment was addressed with a zero-tolerance policy and the proper management of performance challenges.
 - c. In relation to the work environment, there was generally good satisfaction with working arrangements but roadshows were being considered to visit offices and indicators would be reviewed to consider how best to identify specific work environment issues.
 - d. In relation to areas where there had been a decline in positive responses, there was a discussion on the receptiveness of senior management and the need for inclusive management practices. Workshops and regular conversations were being piloted to improvement management and leadership skills.
 - e. Referring to response rates, these were lower than in previous years, with specific challenges in certain directorates, efforts were being made to build trust in the survey and connection with staff to improve response rates.

RESOLVED that the Personnel Committee note progress and thank Diane Christie and Kirsty Ireland for their work.

21. Exclusion of the Press and Public (Item 5)

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 paragraph 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open minutes)

22. Recruitment of the Chief Executive Officer (Item 6)

1. Mr Royel introduced this item which provided a further update on the planned recruitment process to secure KCC's next Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

2. Informal contact would be made initially, with formal recruitment taking place during May. Members discussed the salary of the CEO and how this compared to neighbouring and comparable authorities.

Mr Royel responded to questions of clarification from Members which included the following:

- a. In relation to notice period this was generally 3 months, but it was noted that one authority had recently moved all senior staff to 6 months' notice to provide sustainability in advance of Local Government Reorganisation.
3. The Personnel Committee was content with the general direction of travel in relation to the recruitment of the CEO and the planned timetable for advertisement. There were differing views within the Committee about whether the top tier structure should be confirmed before the CEO was recruited and it was agreed that this should remain fluid with further discussions to be had.

RESOLVED that the Personnel Committee support the progression of the process to recruit a new Chief Executive Officer.