

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 25 March 2026.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive), Mrs K Hunter (Head of People Strategy), Mrs S Hunter-Jones (People Policy Team Manager) and Mrs A Taylor (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

19. Election of Chair

(Item)

In the absence of the Chair the clerk asked for nominees for Chair for this meeting. Mrs Foster proposed and Mr Chapman seconded that Mr Collins be elected Chair for this meeting. This was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that Mr Collins be elected Chair for this meeting.

20. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies had been received from Ms Kemkaran, for whom Mr Chapman was substituting, Miss Morton for whom Mrs Palmer was substituting and Mr Harrison for whom Mrs Lawes was substituting.

Ms Nolan gave her formal apologies to the meeting but joined virtually.

The clerk confirmed that since the publication of the agenda and the approval, by County Council last Thursday, of the Proportionality Report Mr Bradshaw had joined the Committee and Mr Chapman had formally left the Committee.

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

(Item 2)

Mrs Palmer stated that her husband (the Chairman of KCC) was the Armed Forces Champion and also Chairman of the Kent and Medway Civilian Partnership.

Mr Hook stated that he was an adult volunteer with a Beaver Scout Group and Honorary President of Faversham District Scouts.

22. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

23. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers Special Leave

(Item 4)

1. Mrs Susie Hunter-Jones introduced the report which set out a proposal to introduce a formal special leave entitlement for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who support the armed forces youth cadet organisations including: the Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force, and Royal Air Force Air Cadets.
2. She outlined that volunteers currently had no specific entitlement and that the proposal aimed to align the Council with emerging national best practice and support wider national initiatives relating to cadet forces.
3. Mr Watts and Mrs Hunter-Jones answered questions of clarification from Members and noted comments which included the following:
 - a. Members noted the potential benefit of the scheme but raised some concerns;
 - b. There was no financial assessment of the impact of the scheme;
 - c. What would be the cumulative effect of combining cadet leave, reservist leave and annual leave for example;
 - d. There was a need for clarity regarding the Council's position in relation to the Gold Award under the Armed Forces Covenant;
 - e. Members also highlighted the issue of parity with other organised youth groups.
4. A suggestion was made for officers to undertake an assessment of the financial impact, to explore whether the proposal would affect the Council's Gold Award status, to carry out consultation with staff, and to consider whether any future scheme should include arrangements for other youth-related groups. This would be picked up in future agenda planning discussions.
5. Members commented on the importance of fairness, the need to ensure any scheme was financially viable, and the importance of understanding the potential effect on service delivery.
6. Mr Jeffery proposed and Mr Hook seconded that the item be deferred to allow officers to return with additional analysis and information, this was put to the vote.

RESOLVED, by majority vote, that Personnel Committee defer consideration of the report and request that officers bring it back to a future meeting with further analysis.

24. Fostering Friendly Leave

(Item 5)

1. Mrs Susie Hunter-Jones introduced the report which set out proposals for a paid leave entitlement for employees who were approved foster carers for Kent children. She explained that the scheme proposed an entitlement of 8.5 days paid leave in the first year of fostering and 5 days in each subsequent year.
2. Members discussed the benefits of the proposal, noting that any scheme aimed at increasing the number of in-house foster carers would reduce the Council's reliance on more costly external fostering provision and would therefore be financially advantageous for the Council and beneficial for children.
3. Mr Watts and Mrs Hunter-Jones answered questions of clarification from Members and noted comments which included the following:
 - a. Members sought clarification on eligibility, particularly in relation to foster carers who did not live in Kent and carers fostering for agencies outside the county. Officers confirmed that the entitlement would apply where the child was looked after by Kent County Council and that the scheme related specifically to Kent children.
 - b. Members discussed whether the entitlement applied to staff who were already approved foster carers. Officers confirmed that the entitlement would apply to all eligible staff, including those currently fostering, paragraph 4.4 of the report set out the arrangements for subsequent years of fostering which was 5 days leave.
4. The Chairman proposed and Mr Rayner seconded that recommendation set out within the report be put to the Committee. This was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Personnel Committee approve the proposal described in section 4, which introduces a special leave entitlement for eligible employees who foster with Kent Fostering, effective from 1st April 2026.