

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 28 November 2024.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chair), Mrs S Prendergast (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mr A Brady, Mr A J Hook, Mr A Kennedy (Substitute for Mrs S Chandler), Mr D Jeffrey, Rich Lehmann, Mr P J Oakford, Mr D Robey and Mr C Simkins

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms J Clayton (HR & OD Manager), Mrs L Gavin (People Strategy Adviser), Mr P Royel (Director of HR & OD) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mrs Sue Chandler, for whom Mr Andrew Kennedy was substituting.

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

(Item 2)

There were none for this meeting.

3. Minutes - 26 September 2024

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Employee Relations Casework Activity

(Item 4)

1. Jane Clayton introduced this report which set out employee case work activity for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.
2. The report set out the range of employee relations cases being managed by KCC and provided a comparison of the level of case activity over the last three years.
3. There had been an increase in the overall level of cases being formally managed in comparison to the same period in 2023. The greatest volume of cases remained those with ill health(44%) and HR/OD continued to provide a range of health and wellbeing support and advice to enable managers to address issues concerning health at an early stage. Teams identified as having a particularly high level of absence were supported with a range of targeted interventions.

4. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. In relation to ill-health, data was monitored and broken down to look at high levels of absence and determine the reasons for this.
 - b. In relation to bullying and harassment, we did not currently bench-mark against other authorities. The resolution cases concerning bullying and harassment had increased in number but represented a small proportion of the total of all cases. Cases were always followed up with managers taking a proactive approach where there was a need for formal review.
 - c. It was noted that this information was reported on a 6 month basis.

RESOLVED that the employee relations casework activity including senior officer appeals hearings report be noted.

5. Annual Workforce Profile Report update

(Item 5)

1. Paul Royel introduced this report which provided information on the changes in staffing levels, demographics and diversity of KCC's non casual relief sessional and supply (CRSS) workforce in the six month period to 30 September 2024.
2. There had been an increase in staffing levels in the non-school's workforce of 2%, a reduction in agency staff and an increase in fixed term contracts.
3. There had been a slight increase in sickness levels, this was being reviewed and planned activities and interventions were being put into place where spikes were evident to support managers.
4. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. In response to a question about turnover Mr Royel confirmed that although turnover was highest in CYPE and increasing, this was still within the margins of 'healthy turnover'. This was, however, being monitored and HR/OD were working closely with the CYPE Management Team.
 - b. Apprenticeships continued to increase with 57 employees accessing the apprenticeship training within the KCC non-schools' sector.
 - c. Members were concerned that there appeared to have been an increase in staffing levels in CED and DCED. It was noted that vacancies had been held towards the end of the 2023/24 year, as well as a reduction in the use of agency staff.
5. Members asked for an update on apprenticeships at an appropriate time during 2025.

RESOLVED that Members note the Annual Workforce Profile Report Update.

6. Recruitment - Deep Dive

(Item 6)

1. Louise Gavin gave a presentation to Members which was circulated after the meeting.
2. Officers responded to questions of detail and noted comments, which included the following:
 - a. In response to a question about KCC's application process Mrs Gavin explained that there was an option to submit a CV alongside the application form and recruiting managers were encouraged to review both during shortlisting. In relation to completing the application form, advice and guidance was provided to candidates to enable them to get the most out of their application.
 - b. Members were reassured that the number of people applying for jobs with protected characteristics and those being offered a job was broadly in line with the workforce profile.
 - c. There were continued concerns that KCC's workforce profile of minority ethnic staff did not reflect the population of Kent, albeit it was recognised that the gap was closing. Work was continuing to improve the profiles.
 - d. In response to a query about whether decisions of recruiting managers were monitored throughout the recruitment process there was an expectation that managers would take responsibility for the process. Interviews were typically held with a panel of interviewers who were expected to have undertaken the relevant training.
 - e. Members expressed an interest in understanding which countries international applicants were applying from and the types of roles they had applied for.

RESOLVED that Personnel Committee note the main findings in the report and supporting slides presented at the meeting.

7. Exclusion of the Press and Public *(Item 7)*

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 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open minutes)

8. Pay Bargaining *(Item 8)*

(Mrs Clayton left the room before the start of this item).

1. Paul Royel introduced this item which updated the Personnel Committee on the local pay bargaining process.

2. The formal submission from the trades unions had been received and an initial response had been sent from KCC.
3. The final position would be reported to Personnel Committee on 23 January 2025.

RESOLVED that the Personnel Committee note the process to date and note the update provided at the meeting.