

Notice of Meeting



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Personnel Committee

Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber

Note: This meeting can be streamed live here: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/personnelcommitteelive>.

Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday 6 January 2025

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Sam Chiverton (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer) on (01635) 519462

e-mail: Sam.Chiverton1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



To: Councillors Matt Shakespeare (Chairman), Biyi Oloko (Vice-Chairman),
Antony Amirtharaj, Jeff Brooks and Laura Coyle

Substitutes: Councillors Martin Colston, Denise Gaines, Ross Mackinnon and
Howard Woollaston

Agenda

Part I

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- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 2. | Minutes | 3 - 8 |
| | To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the
Committee Meetings held on 2 July 2024 and 28 November 2024. | |

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Service Director (Strategy & Governance)

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact
Sadie Owen on telephone (01635) 519052.



DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 JULY 2024

Councillors Present: Matt Shakespeare (Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeff Brooks and Laura Coyle

Also Present: Sarah Clarke, Paula Goodwin, Samantha Hodson and Sadie Owen

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024 were accepted as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2024 were accepted as true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Update on HR Activity 2023/2024

Paula Goodwin introduced the report which provided an update on HR activity for 2023/24 and included annual data for the equality makeup of the corporate workforce as of 31 March 2024.

It was explained that the report contained updates on establishment employee data, training, performance management, talent and recruitment. Paula Goodwin highlighted that turnover had reduced from 15.9% to 12.47% in 2023/24, and that there had been an increase in permanent social workers, achieved by filling vacancies with direct recruitment and less advertising. It was further noted that agency spend had been reduced by £2.5 million in the past year.

It was noted that whilst there had been a slight increase in sickness absence from 9.9 days per employee to 10.69 days per employee, this was predominantly within long term sickness absence rather than short term absence which had decreased over the past twelve months.

Councillor Jeff Brooks congratulated officers on the recruitment results but then referred to page 18 of the report which noted 380 employee vacancies (which equated to 20% of the establishment), and requested further explanation as he did not believe that the figure was accurate. Paula Goodwin clarified that table 5.3 provided a fuller breakdown of the 380 vacancies. It was explained that due to a time lag between transitioning the HR and Payroll system from Resourcelink to ITrent and data not being updated promptly as a result, the actual figure of vacant FTE posts was 66.79 as of 31 March 2024. It was explained that future reporting using the ITrent system would be more accurate and effective.

In response to a query from Councillor Antony Amirtharaj it was explained that graduate data was not reported separately, however there was an early careers post within the HR team that was responsible for transforming the council's apprenticeship, T level, and graduate scheme offering. It was reported that there was currently one formal graduate

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from the National Graduate Scheme, however HR were undertaking work to attract more graduates and make greater use of the graduate apprenticeships.

Noting the increase in sickness absence, Councillor Laura Coyle queried whether there was a long-term strategy to tackle the issue. Paula Goodwin explained that within HR there was a permanent wellbeing business partner who had been working on wellbeing principles and educating managers on wellbeing. Further, there was information on the intranet website, mental health first aiders across the organisation, and an Employee Assistance Programme which offered counselling as part of its support package.

Paula Goodwin explained that it was long term sickness absence that was increasing, which was not necessarily due to work-related stress, and consequently was more difficult to assist staff with. However significant work was undertaken with the Occupational Health Service to assist staff with phased returns and to support staff with access to work, with reasonable adjustments.

Councillor Brooks referred to section 7.19 of the report and queried whether WBC should benchmark against other similar local authorities rather than Office for National Statistics (ONS) data. Paula Goodwin suggested that it would be difficult to find a direct match with which to benchmark, and that local authorities were not necessarily keen to share sickness absence figures.

Councillor Matt Shakespeare referred to section 7.6 of the report, noting a sharp increase in sickness absence, and requested some further detail to explain the data. Paula Goodwin noted that with the recruitment of the wellbeing officer there was a greater drive to tackle the rise in sickness and to assist and educate line managers to support sick staff.

Councillor Brooks queried when Personnel Committee could expect a report on the introduction of the Behaviour Framework. Paula Goodwin highlighted that there were designated behaviour champions who regularly reported on the positives and negatives throughout the organisation, however the Behaviour Framework required further time to embed throughout the organisation following the introduction of a number of supporting policies and procedures. Paula Goodwin asserted that feedback had been positive, however suggested that early 2025 would be too soon to indicate how successful the Behaviour Framework had been.

Councillor Shakespeare queried why completed appraisal data was not 100%, given the importance that appraisals should be regarded by both management and staff. Paula Goodwin noted that appraisals generally occurred at year end in March, April or May and that the data reported had been produced on 31 March 2024. Consequently, it did not record any appraisals that had taken place since that date. It was reported that updated data would be published as part of the organisation’s key performance indicators prior to the next meeting in July.

Councillor Shakespeare and Brooks thanked officers for their work.

RESOLVED that: Personnel Committee considered and commented on the information provided within the report.

4. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held on 14 January 2025.

(The meeting commenced at 18:30 and closed at 19:02)

CHAIRMAN

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Date of Signature

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2024

Councillors Present: Biyi Oloko (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Martin Colston (Substitute) (In place of Laura Coyle) and Denise Gaines (Substitute) (In place of Jeff Brooks)

Also Present: Joseph Holmes (Interim Chief Executive) and Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Matt Shakespeare, Councillor Jeff Brooks and Councillor Laura Coyle

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. Approval for designation of Section 151 Officer

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 3) which sought approval to appoint a designated Section 151 Officer.

3. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#).

4. Approval For Designation of Section 151 Officer Part II

The Committee considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 5) which sought approval to appoint a designated Section 151 Officer.

RESOLVED to appoint the Section 151 Officer as outlined in the exempt report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and closed at 5.40pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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