

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 14 JANUARY 2025**

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

Also Present: Sam Chiverton, Samantha Hodson, Thomas Radbourne, Karen Turner

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Laura Coyle

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 2 July 2024 and 28 November 2024 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. Statutory Pay Policy

Karen Turner introduced the report (Agenda Item 4) and explained that the Council was required to publish a pay policy statement on an annual basis. Members were being asked to endorse the report prior to it being referred to Full Council for approval.

Councillor Jeff Brooks highlighted that HAY pay scales were being used and sought confirmation that the percentage differential between the salary of the highest and lowest paid workers was being maintained. Karen Turner confirmed this was the case.

Councillor Biyi Oloko queried whether all local authorities adopted the same pay scales. Councillor Brooks advised that the majority did so, he clarified that the authority was not required to adopt them but was guided by them.

Councillor Matt Shakespeare recommended a histogram be created that showed the number of staff at each grade.

Actions:

- Create a histogram that showed the number of staff at each grade.

RESOLVED that: The Statutory Pay Policy be recommended for approval by Full Council on 27 March 2025.

4. Update on HR Activity Q1 and Q2 - 2024/2025

Karen Turner introduced the report (Agenda Item 5) which provided an update on HR activity for quarters one and two of 2024/25. The report formed part of the bi-annual update to the Committee and outlined some of the changes to HR activity and statistics throughout the current financial year.

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Karen Turner highlighted that there had been an increase in the amount of case work for HR, she advised that there had been significant recruitment activity and that turnover for all staff had increased by 1%. It was also noted that sickness absence had increased from 8.75 days to 10.24 days per employee when compared to the same period in the previous year.

Councillor Biyi Oloko queried the percentage of the overall budget that was committed to salary costs. Councillor Jeff Brooks advised that someone from Finance would need to answer Councillor Oloko's question but estimated that around 60% of the budget was dedicated to covering salaries.

Councillor Oloko noted the headcount had dropped between 2021 and 2024 however, the number of full-time employees (FTES) was going up. He sought clarity on why this was. Councillor Brooks advised that post FTE had reduced from 1767 to 1637 meaning this figure was becoming more closely aligned to 2021/22 figures.

It was clarified that post FTE was the total number of posts whereas occupied FTE were the posts that had someone assigned to them.

Councillor Brooks highlighted that iTrent had been used to refine the number of vacant posts. He noted the table on page 28 of the pack which equated to about 70 posts that the authority was actively looking to recruit to.

Councillor Oloko sought clarity on the context behind the number of agency workers employed by the Council. Sam Hodson advised that temporary workers were recruited through the Council's Comensura contract. She noted that the temporary workers were not reported in the figures however, they were potentially filling a post contained within.

Councillor Oloko highlighted the need for clarity on the effect privatisation of local care homes was to have on headcount.

Councillor Antony Amirtharaj noted that three people had very sadly died in service and sought assurance that the authority was offering support to colleagues. Karen Turner reassured Members that the Council had offered support to those affected.

Councillor Jeff Brooks advised that he was pushing for HR to be involved in exit interviews.

Karen Turner highlighted Appendix A of the report which contained the figures pertaining to starters, leavers and staff turnover for the previous five years.

Councillor Amirtharaj queried whether there was any change in the authority's approach to home working. Karen Turner advised that the Cd a flexible working policy that had been in place for a number of years.

Councillor Brooks asserted that he wanted to see figures that showed the number of people that were leaving the Council within one year of employment.

Councillor Oloko noted that the number of new starters between the ages of 55 and 64 was relatively low whilst the number of leavers within this demographic was high and sought clarity on the cause for this. Councillor Brooks advised that after the age of 55 retirement could become a possibility for some.

Sam Hodson highlighted section 7 of the report noting that there had been a 37% increase in new starters and a 24% increase in application numbers over the period. She advised the recruitment and on-boarding module had been rolled out on iTrent, progress had been made on developing staff, a number of T-Level students had been hosted and a greater focus had been given to graduate and post-graduate apprenticeships. She noted that the Employee Value Proposition and the careers site had been launched. It was highlighted that the number of agency staff had decreased.

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Councillor Oloko noted several people had asked him about working for the local authority and queried where he could direct these residents. Councillor Oloko also queried the level of automation utilised by the system. Sam Hodson advised that they did utilise AI internally for the purpose of advert generation.

Councillor Oloko queried if demographic information was collated when job applications were received. Sam Hodson advised that this data was captured and reports could be generated through iTrent.

Councillor Brooks highlighted the recruitment software industry was getting more sophisticated but noted it was important not to lose the human element whilst utilising it. Councillor Brooks advised that they were hoping to utilise iTrent to retain applicant information so that candidates could be approached about future opportunities. He also suggested that they were planning to make better use of the referral scheme.

Karen Turner introduced section 11 of the report noting that the Council's HR team supported both corporate managers and around 60% of WBC schools in managing people issues to conclusion. She highlighted the tables on pages 33 and 34.

Councillor Brooks noted that the executive summary suggested that casework was increasing whilst Table 1 indicated the opposite. Karen Turner explained that the table on page 33 provided data for previous years whilst the 24/25 figures were only for Q1 and Q2. Karen Turner advised that the reason for the uptick was because the HRBP team were regularly meeting managers in order to be proactive rather than reactive with cases.

Councillor Brooks was pleased to hear that more work was being done to intervene early, he highlighted the table on page 34 noting that sickness was the main driver behind the increase in caseload. He queried the point at which sickness became a case and expressed concern about the prospect of it being primarily long-term sickness due to increased challenge in getting those staff back to work. Karen Turner advised that it was a mixture of short- and long-term sickness. She advised that with mental health sickness they asked managers to refer the employee to Occupational Health.

Karen Turner introduced section 12 noting that there had been an increase in sickness absence. She noted that the most common reason for long term absence was mental health conditions whilst for short term absence it was minor illnesses. The most common reason for both long and short-term absence in 23/24 was mental health conditions.

Councillor Brooks highlighted the table on page 35 noting that the 12 days lost in the Adult Social Care Directorate (excluding care homes) was still too high and requested further explanation in the next report if this was still at a relatively high level.

Karen Turner introduced section 13 of the report noting that the table on page 38 presented data on the percentage of managers that had completed their appraisals. She advised that there was no data in Q1 due to the new iTrent system being launched.

Councillor Shakespeare was concerned that the number of managers completing appraisals was so low. Karen Turner advised that performance management training had been rolled out to managers to assist them in supporting their employees.

Councillor Brooks advised that appraisals need more rigour at the top of the organisation, he highlighted section 13.3 and was dissatisfied with the word hopeful, he felt that the organisation needed to take a stronger stance on improving this.

Councillor Oloko queried whether performance appraisal was a KPI for team leads. Sam Hodson advised that to her knowledge they were not but she would take it away and get back to him with a more firm answer. Councillor Amirtharaj agreed noting that this was a key aspect of management.

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Section 14 of the report noted that there had been a training holiday for e-learning as the learning hub did not start its staggered rollout until November 2024. She noted the table in section 14.2 of the report which highlighted the type of training that had been completed from April to September 2024.

Councillor Brooks noted the table at 14.2 and highlighted that a lot of work had been done to deliver data protection training. He queried whether the authority had caught up and sought assurance that the Council's emphasis had been correct. He also sought clarity on how the Council defined a courageous conversation. Karen Turner advised that the courageous conversation training was designed to educate participants on how difficult conversations were to be managed. She also advised that Data Protection had to be completed annually meaning every member of staff had to complete it by a certain point. Councillor Amirtharaj advised that completion of mandatory training should have been a KPI for all staff.

Karen Turner highlighted section 15 of the report noting that Occupational Health reviewed employees online, in person and via phone call appointments. She noted the employee assistance programme was available 24/7 to staff and that there was an internal wellbeing provision available to staff.

Councillor Oloko queried why Councillors were not included in this training. Councillor Brooks advised that the Member Development Group assured that Members were given access to training tailored to their specific function. He advised that he would take away the notion that Members be given access to wellbeing training and advised Karen Turner to take this up with Sarah Clarke.

Actions:

- Sam Hodson to advise whether completing appraisals was listed as a KPI for managers.
- Karen Turner to discuss member access to wellbeing training with Sarah Clarke.

RESOLVED that: Personnel Committee had considered the report and provided feedback on its content.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold the next meeting on 15 July at 7pm.

(The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and closed at Time Not Specified)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature