

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PERSONNEL BOARD  
HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.50 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth (Chair), Stephen Conway, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro and Lindsay Ferris

**Officers Present**

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist  
Matt Pope, Executive Director Children, Adults and Health  
Sally Watkins, Chief Operating Officer  
Sally Halliwell, Lead HR Business Partner

**22. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Prue Bray and Pauline Helliard Symons.

**23. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 21 June 2023 and the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 13 July 2023, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

With regards to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023, the Chair commented that People's Strategy should read People Strategy. In addition, she referred to issues in recruitment being taken back to the specific department for consideration. She commented that whilst the departments should have ownership of any issues, there should still be a dialogue with the Personnel Board about spending on agency staff.

**24. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**25. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

**26. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

**27. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023**

The Board considered the Pay Policy 2023.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- It was noted that the lead officer for the report was Sally Halliwell and not Sally Watkins.
- The Pay Policy was a statutory requirement.
- The Chair commented that the Council had an annual expenditure of around £530million and provided a broad range of services to its residents. Central government grants were failing to keep pace with inflation, and needs were rising. It was essential that the Council attracted the right staff with the right skills, who could provide key services for its residents. Pauline Jorgensen asked how much of the £530million was directly controlled by officers. She sought clarification from officers.

**RESOLVED:** That the Pay Policy 2023 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

## **28. DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN SERVICES PERMANENT RECRUITMENT PROPOSAL**

The Board considered a report regarding a proposal for the recruitment of a permanent Director of Children's Services.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- Members were advised that an interim Director of Children's Services had been in place since December 2021, and permission was being sought to recruit to the role on a permanent basis. The report detailed the proposed recruitment process.
- Pauline Jorgensen noted that the report stated that the cost would be £198,000, and commented that this was not the case, and that this was the gross figure. She expressed concern regarding the costs identified for advertising, particularly in the Municipal Journal. She questioned whether the Council was moving more towards LinkedIn recruitment. Matt Pope confirmed that it would be at least cost neutral to the Council as the role already existed. A lot of work was being undertaken by HR to help reduce agency costs. However, due to the significant nature of the role it was considered necessary to also advertise via the Municipal Journal. Sally Watkins added that the Council bringing in its own recruiter had a big impact. However, balance was important and there was a need to advertise where the best possible candidates would be reached.
- Stephen Conway stated that it was imperative that a permanent Director was recruited. The role oversaw a vital part of the Council's services, which represented 23% of the Council's revenue spend. Stability and strong management were imperative.
- Lindsay Ferris emphasised the importance of getting a good number of candidates.
- It was suggested that the background section of the report be amended to highlight that the post would be cost neutral to the Council with the exception to the recruitment costs, which was an inevitable cost, as the current incumbent was an interim member of staff. Rachel Bishop-Firth agreed that the recruitment process would have cost far less than in previous years.

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the proposed recruitment process for the appointment of a permanent Director of Children's Services be approved.
- 2) The report be amended as detailed above.

## **29. AGENCY & TEMPORARY WORKER REPORT Q4 2022/23**

The Board considered the Agency & Temporary Worker Report Q4 2022/23.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- By Quarter 4 the spend had reduced quarter on quarter. The work into making services more accountable by using the framework, was having an impact.
- Whilst there was a slight increase in agency costs in Children's Services, there were several hard to fill roles in this area.

- The report contained a breakdown of the different services. Typically, in areas that were hard to fill, interims or consultants were used.
- The annual increase year on year for agency spend was approximately £755,000. However, benchmarking with the other Berkshire local authorities had shown the Council to have one of the lowest spends on agency workers, in Berkshire. Skill shortages and pressures on recruitment continued to be widespread issues.
- Sally Halliwell outlined the approach going forwards including greater use of the framework, more robust management and more detailed, regular reports to the Directors and Assistant Directors.
- Stephen Conway emphasised that the use of temporary workers and agency staff could in some cases be positive, when they were used to staff particular short-term projects for which funding had been provided. Rachel Bishop-Firth agreed that a judicious use of agency staff could mean the right staff in the right posts at the right time.
- Pauline Jorgensen questioned whether those paid through small companies were included in the scope of the report. Sally Watkins indicated that they were considered temporary workers and would be included in the scope. She went on to outline the types of workers that would not be included in the scope.
- Pauline Jorgensen noted that the Board had been previously provided with the number of long-term agency and temporary workers, and requested that this information be provided again in future. Members agreed that officers should not be able to be identified in a public report.
- Lindsay Ferris stated that trends should be monitored to ensure that there were not issues with recruitment in areas where there traditionally had not been. Sally Watkins added that looking at trend data with regards to what was happening with a service was part of the ongoing work around the BI dashboard. In addition, with the enhanced HR partnering model, conversations were being had at directorate leadership teams.
- Pauline Jorgensen commented that it would be helpful to receive information on the head count equivalent of agency workers and temporary workers, how this compared with the Council as a whole, and trends over time.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth praised the positive impact that the Agency Contracts Manager was starting to have. Members were assured that there was no conflict of interest with this post.

**RESOLVED:** That the Agency & Temporary Worker Report Q4 2022/23 be noted.

### **30. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.

### **31. PERMANENT APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

The Board considered a report regarding the permanent appointment of the Director Public Health.

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.
- 2) The report be amended as discussed.

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