

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PERSONNEL BOARD
HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Rachel Bishop-Firth (Chair), Prue Bray (Vice-Chair), Pauline Helliard-Symons, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro and Lindsay Ferris

Officers Present

Madeleine Shopland, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Louise Livingston, Assistant Director HR & OD (until item 40)
Sally Watkins, Chief Operating Officer
Sally Halliwell, Head of HR & OD

32. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Stephen Conway.

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 14 August 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair requested that it made clear that the cost of the proposal relating to the Director of Children's Services was £198,000 gross figure and oncosts.

34. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Prue Bray declared a Personal Interest in Item 37 Domestic Abuse Policy refresh on the grounds that she was a trustee of Kaleidoscopic uk, a domestic abuse charity.

35. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

36. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

37. DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY REFRESH

The Board considered the Domestic Abuse Policy refresh.

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

- Louise Livingston indicated that the Council had had a Domestic Abuse Policy in place for some time. It had been reviewed to highlight support for those experiencing domestic abuse, and also how the Council would deal with perpetrators of domestic abuse. Guidance was provided for managers.
- Statistics stated that approximately 5.5% of employees (around 74 people) could be experiencing domestic abuse.
- The refresh was in line with the Council working towards accreditation for the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. Whilst HR had produced the policy, support had been received from Community Safety.
- Pauline Helliard-Symons commented that no reference was made to posters being used to publicise the policy and guidance. In addition, the advice to managers did not indicate how to support people moving out of their home and how to do so. Sally Halliwell confirmed that posters would be part of the campaign. Louise Livingston

added that the policy signposted employees living both inside and outside of the Borough, to support that they could access.

- Rachel Bishop-Firth commented that people could be at their most vulnerable when they were looking to leave or had initially left their abuser.
- Pauline Jorgensen praised the document and indicated that it had also been presented to Overview and Scrutiny. She suggested that it would be useful to split up the guidance and to send links to Members, so that they could best support residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse. Sally Watkins suggested information could be provided which could be included in the Member Development Programme for new Members and also circulated to current Members. The Board agreed that Members should be reminded not to leave the information with people, potentially putting them in danger.
- Pauline Jorgensen went on to ask how much the accreditation would cost and what benefits the Council would receive from it. Louise Livingston agreed to provide a written answer.
- Prue Bray was pleased to note that the policy stated that managers should not encourage staff experiencing domestic abuse to leave their situation and that this must be their own decision. She went on to state that post separation abuse and trauma from abuse were also issues that managers needed to be aware of and be able to address.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth commented that the policy and guidance would be publicly available, and asked what could be done to boost understanding with partner organisations. Sally Watkins indicated that the Voluntary Sector Action Group would consider the policy and work had been undertaken in conjunction with the Community Safety team. Residents could also access the Cranstoun service.
- Members questioned whether support phone lines were available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sally Watkins indicated that officers would look into this and update the information.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth commented that the scope used was quite generic to HR policies and questioned whether this could be revisited.

RESOLVED: That the revision to the Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy for line managers and staff be approved so that the Council can progress its accreditation with the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance).

38. WORKFORCE EQUALITIES MONITORING REPORT

The Board considered the Workforce Equalities Monitoring Report.

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

- The Workforce Equalities Monitoring Report was presented annually to the Personnel Board.
- Information was requested as part of the recruitment process, but it was not mandatory that it was provided. Nevertheless, data collection was improving.
- Louise Livingston highlighted an action plan. Dates would be added actions and there would be a 6 month review of performance against these actions.
- Data was shared with staff networks and these networks were asked for other initiatives where further improvements could be made.
- Prue Bray asked what was being done to address the lack of data around disabilities.

- Prue Bray went on to ask about the spread of ethnicity and gender in the salary ranges. She commented that there seemed to be more men in higher salary ranges but more female employees overall. Prue Bray suggested further analysis of the gender pay gap and how this would be addressed. Louise Livingston commented that the Council was looking at using the Disability Confident Scheme around recruitment, sharing the learning around that, and becoming a Disability Confident employer. The Neuro Divergent Staff Network was assisting around training for staff and managers. Members were informed that further analysis work was being undertaken around the gender pay gap, and also around ethnicity and pay.
- Sally Halliwell indicated that there were some gaps in the data. A lot of data had not yet been transferred on to the system. Officers were looking at employees could share this information via forms and the information then inputted. Work was being undertaken around encouraging more people to share their data.
- In response to a question as to when a change was likely to be seen in data collection, Sally Halliwell commented that it was hoped this would be seen by the end of the financial year. HR met with staff networks on a monthly basis and were improving relations with them. The networks were helping to encourage staff to provide their data.
- Stuart Munro felt that achievements needed to be highlighted early in the report.
- Lindsay Ferris felt that the reports had improved over the years.
- The Board discussed job evaluation by job families. Louise Livingston confirmed that if you were doing the same or a similar type of work, you would be paid at a similar level for that work. An equitable job evaluation system was important.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth questioned whether all salaries quoted were full time equivalents and were informed that they were.
- Prue Bray commented that it would be useful to receive information about the percentage of males and females in each pay band. She also suggested that reference be made to those who identified as neither male or female.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth questioned whether information regarding ethnicity was broken down further than White British and Ethnic Minority Groups, and was informed that this information was collected at recruitment stage, but the information presented was simplified for reporting purposes.
- Rachel Bishop-Firth suggested that reference be made to the possible effects of age on some elements such as disability, and comparisons with the Borough.
- In response to a question regarding the bands for pay, Sally Halliwell confirmed that those used were standard groupings, used to enable benchmarking.
- Members questioned what more could be done to encourage employees to disclose their sexual orientation. Sally Halliwell stated that there may be some long standing employees who may not have been asked to update their data for some time. Pauline Jorgensen indicated that some companies asked employees for information on an annual basis.
- Louise Livingston agreed to check that the correct terms regarding sexual orientation were being used.
- Rachel Bishop Firth noted that there was a gap between the number of White British applicants and Ethnic Minority Group applicant being shortlisted for roles. She questioned whether numbers were skewed by applicants applying outside of the UK who did not currently have the right to work in the UK. Pauline Jorgensen felt that applicants should be asked if they had the right to work in the UK and if the answer was no, then that individual not be included in the figures.

- Prue Bray commented that the Council was looking to recruit from abroad for some roles such as social workers.
- In response to a question Louise Livingston confirmed that an e-learning module on unconscious bias had recently been introduced.
- Lindsay Ferris felt that the information provided in relation to employees with disabilities was vague. He wanted assurance that any legacy issues experienced had been addressed.

RESOLVED: That the workforce equalities monitoring report be approved and published.

39. 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.

40. CHANGES TO OPERATING MODEL OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

The Board considered a report regarding changes to the operating model of the Chief Executive's office.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be agreed.