

Lancashire County Council

Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th December, 2023 at 2.00 pm in
Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

County Councillor Ged Mirfin (Chair)

County Councillors

J Shedwick	A Ali OBE
M Dad BEM JP	Y Motala
S Hind	M Salter

County Councillor Matthew Salter replaced County Councillor Stephen Clarke for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Nweeda Khan, Charles Edwards, Terry Hurn, and Jean Parr.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9 November 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. People Services: Council Workforce Update including Benchmarking: Recruitment, Retention, Reward and Performance Management

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Alan Vincent, Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader), Lucy Thompson, Director of People, Deborah Barrow, Head of Service Human Resources, and Rachel Rump, Head of Service Skills, Learning and Development to the meeting.

The report provided an in-depth data snapshot of the current workforce including the size of the authority, the workforce demographics and the insights from the data that

can assist the county council in its workforce attraction, retention and development strategies.

The committee thanked the officers for the detailed report. A presentation was also provided to the committee, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

Comments and queries raised from the committee were as follows:

- The committee requested for more details on the age profile of employees, including the mean and mode age of employees by service area, to be provided at a future meeting.
- The number of employees at the council had increased by 20% during the previous six to seven years, and it was recommended that a benchmarking study be carried out to see how many people were employed by other authorities of a similar size. It was also noted that the 20% rise might be related to TUPE employees and the in-house integration of services that were previously outsourced.
- The committee discussed the gender split within the organisation, as presented in the presentation, and requested further information be provided regarding the gender split within each service area of the council.
- In addition, the committee requested that a report on the county council's approach to an ageing workforce be provided at a future meeting. Additionally, it was recommended that the council consider 'staying in touch' with former workers to gain valuable feedback and understand the reasons behind their departure from the council.
- Regarding recruiting more people to work for the council, it was noted that the council employed approximately 600 apprentices in a variety of roles. Although the council was making every effort to recruit more young people, it was difficult because not many young people wanted to work for the council, which was a problem shared by other local authorities. As a result, it was recommended that the council think about releasing a press release to highlight the county council's apprenticeship initiatives.
- The committee was interested in change management and how the council was ensuring staff members were more involved in making changes within the authority. Therefore, the committee requested that a report on the steps being taken to ensure that staff members were involved in making changes to tackle any identifiable issue within the council be brought back to a future meeting.
- The committee wanted to know how young people could find out about apprenticeships offered by the council and in Lancashire in general, how the council retained talent for the next generation of officers, and what efforts were being made in conjunction with colleges and universities to ensure that as many young people as possible stayed in Lancashire after graduating. It was suggested that the council look at how this work was being delivered



across comparable authorities and how others work with universities to develop bespoke graduate programmes. Additionally, the council should be collaborating more closely with the universities and other local employers to develop customised training programmes or courses where a job was 'guaranteed' at the end of the course.

- The committee was informed of the importance of identifying issues with an employee's job, early on, such as during a possible 'stay interview' to ensure any possible issues are identified early on and can be resolved. As a result, the committee asked officers to consider the introduction of 'stay interviews' and data from exit interviews to be looked at to determine the reasons why employees leave. It was highlighted that "exit interviews" were voluntary and employees were under no obligation to have one before they left the organisation.
- Concerns were raised regarding the number of vacancies held by the council and the committee was informed that efforts were being made to lower the number of vacancies, including the implementation of a talent team to look at a wide range of candidates to fulfil those posts. Consequently, the committee asked for more information regarding the vacant positions held by the council, including the pay scale for those roles, how long posts had remained vacant for, and a breakdown of the numbers by service area.

A summary of the recommendations raised by the committee were read out, and it was suggested that a further recommendation be added for the consideration of a possible forum or alumni of former employees to be established to share valuable feedback and retain knowledge from former employees. Work shadowing and mentoring was also suggested as a way for apprentices or employees to gather valuable insight into different areas of the council, and the committee suggested apprentices possibly shadowing councillors as they carry out their work.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for answering the committees' questions.

Resolved: That the following recommendations be shared with the Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader):

- i. A future report or briefing note to the committee at an appropriate time be provided to consider the following:
 - a. The mean and mode age of employees in reference to Age Profile, to be provided and a further breakdown of age profile by service area.
 - b. In relation to gender, a further breakdown to be provided for each service area.
 - c. A breakdown of geographic data in terms of where our employees live, for those living outside of the county, where possible.



- d. Consideration to be given to how the organisation is dealing with an aging workforce.
 - e. Benchmarking data on other similarly comparable authorities in this area of work to be provided as and when available.
 - f. Further data to be provided to breakdown which service areas vacant posts are held in, what the pay levels are and how long vacancies have been vacant for.
 - g. Exit interview data to be considered to develop a greater understanding of why employees have left the organisation.
 - h. Details of the steps being taken to ensure that staff are more involved in change management at the authority.
- ii. Consideration to be given to the following mechanisms to further strengthen the recruitment and retention of employees:
- a. Staying in touch with former employees for feedback to be gathered and a greater understanding of why they left the organisation and the concept of 'Stay Interviews' to be explored to identify any potential issues or barriers for employees considering leaving the authority.
 - b. A press release to promote the work the county council is doing with apprenticeships.
 - c. Closer working with local universities and employers to develop bespoke training programmes or courses where there is a job 'guaranteed' at the end of the course. Consider how this work is being delivered across other comparable authorities.
 - d. The formation of an Alumni or Forum of former employees who would be ambassadors for the organisation.
 - e. Greater work shadowing and mentoring opportunities for existing employees.

5. Lancashire County Council's People Strategy

Lucy Thompson, Director of People, Deborah Barrow, Head of Service Human Resources, and Rachel Rump, Head of Service Skills, Learning and Development, presented the report to the committee.

The report provided a further update to the presentation and reports presented to the Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee in December 2022, and it was noted that since the last update, an organisational People Strategy had been developed and launched and the report provided an update on purpose and progress.

Comments and queries raised from the committee were as follows:



- The committee discussed how people might perceive the work culture at Lancashire County Council in case the person wanted to know prior to applying for a job within the council, and it was noted that the council's ambition was that all parts of the council should be a place where every employee regardless of level, background and service would thrive and that the council would be a place that people would want to come and work.
- Utilising transferable skills and being able to transfer skills from one area of work into another was also raised by the committee as an area that needed more work to ensure employees were being training with a skillset that could be easily transferred into another role.

The Chair thanked the officers for answering the committees' questions.

Resolved: That Lancashire County Council's People Strategy be welcomed with no further recommendations from the committee at this time.

6. Work Programme 2023

The committee considered the work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Resolved: That the Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny work programme for 2023/24, be noted.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 6 February 2024 at 2pm at County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall
Preston

