

Lancashire County Council

Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 31st October, 2024 at 10.30 am in
Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

County Councillor Ged Mirfin (Chair)

County Councillors

J Shedwick
C Edwards
S Hind
H Khan

E Lewis
J Mein
R Woollam

County Councillor Jennifer Mein replaced County Councillor Jean Parr for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Yousuf Motala.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 26 September 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Work Programme 2024/25

The committee considered the work programme for the 2024/25 municipal year, and an update on actions and assurances.

Sarah Robinson, the new Head of Asset Management, delivered a presentation on the Asset Management Service. It was explained that the purpose of the presentation was to introduce Sarah to the committee and outline the role and current priorities of the service, along with the Property Strategy in advance of a more detailed report being presented to the committee at its meeting scheduled on 12 February 2025 as set out in the work programme. The report for the meeting in February 2025 would cover what data the county council collects and how it was



used, information on occupancy, use and disposal, the strategic property process and decision making, as well as a progress update on the Property Strategy development. A copy of the presentation is set out in the minutes.

Comments and queries raised from the committee were as follows:

- An officer Task and Finish Group had been established to deliver the aim of the property strategy and would report back to the Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader) on a regularly basis.
- Members requested that the report to be presented at the committee meeting on 12 February 2025 should include information on the commercialisation of the council assets, the county council's partnership arrangements with district councils and voluntary organisations.

Resolved: That

- i. The work programme for 2024/25 at Appendix 'A' of the report be noted.
- ii. The written response from County Councillor Peter Buckley, Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services to the Committee's recommendations on Creative Lancashire and Arts and the Creative Step Programme detailed in Appendix 'B' of the report be noted.
- iii. The information included in the reports for the 9 December 2024 meeting of the Committee be confirmed.
- iv. The information provided as part of the actions and assurances to the Committee with regard to future work programme items at Appendix 'C' of the report be noted.

5. Workforce Matters

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Alan Vincent, Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader), and Lucy Thompson, Director of People, to the meeting. Two graduate apprentices, J Saunders and A Olagboyega also attended the meeting.

The report presented provided insights on the wider sector workforce, including providing an overview on specific pieces of work undertaken over the last year that would help the county council to further develop a culture of performance and accountability at leadership level. A presentation was presented to the committee to support the report, a copy of which is set out in the minutes.

Comments and queries raised from the committee were as follows:

- The improvement in the council's vacancy rate and how it compared with other authorities was discussed, including whether flexible working and working from home had an impact. It was noted that flexible working was not a one-size-fits-all solution, and some roles were more suitable for hybrid or home working than others. However, candidates often enquired about the organisation's approach to flexible working, with the council aiming to accommodate most requests, subject to the type of job.



- It was requested that a report be presented to a future meeting on recruitment, focusing on difficult-to-recruit roles across the various directorates of the council, including the challenges faced on recruitment such as the successes and failures in recruitment, as well as the market conditions that hinder recruitment efforts. It was also suggested that the report cover the recruitment strategies and proactive actions being used, such as recruitment events, advertisements, and leveraging existing employees to promote the organisation to potential candidates. The significant vacancy rate for social workers was also highlighted and it was suggested that a "deep dive" into the issues affecting social worker recruitment be undertaken.
- The committee welcomed the information in the report on exit interviews and suggested that a deeper analysis of exit interview data was needed to identify any recurring themes and implement potential actions to reduce staff turnover. It was also highlighted that keeping experienced staff and supporting managers in retaining their staff was essential, and that there were plans to make exit interviews more accessible through the council's Oracle Fusion system, ensuring confidentiality and better data reporting.
- The introduction of stay interviews to understand why employees chose to stay with the council and how the organisation could meet their needs was also highlighted and it was noted that the primary reason for employees leaving the council was believed to be career development opportunities, rather than pay and conditions.
- The committee requested more information on the lowest paid posts, such as what the posts were, within both the Growth, Environment, Transport and Health, and Resources Directorates be shared with the Committee. It was further requested if a report could be provided that included information on live staffing issues, such as long-term sickness absence, maternity, paternity, caring responsibilities and for the report to also cover employee assistance factors such as phased returns/reintegration, remote working and maintaining professional competency.
- The two graduate apprentices present at the meeting were invited to introduce themselves and were asked about their initial impressions of the county council, the council's best features, and areas for improvement. The apprentices highlighted the positive work atmosphere and the training and development opportunities as some of the council's best features and mentioned that the accessibility of County Hall was an area that could be improved for disability access. Following the discussion, the committee requested a briefing note be provided to provide an update on the National Graduate Management Trainee programme at the county council.
- The committee requested for another briefing note to be provided on the definition of lean and agile in public sector and for the briefing note to cover aspects of culture and behaviour change.
- The importance of recognising and promoting the flexibility and adaptability of the workforce in recruitment efforts was highlighted and it was suggested that these qualities should be incorporated into the report on recruitment.

The committee thanked the officers present for the detailed report presented.



Resolved: That;

- i. Reports on the following matters be presented at a future scheduled meeting of the Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee:
 - a. A report providing information on posts that are difficult to recruit to.
 - b. A report on proactive actions taken to retain staff.
 - c. A report providing information on live staffing issues, including long term sickness absence, maternity, paternity, caring responsibilities and for the report to cover employee assistance factors such as phased returns/reintegration, remote working and maintaining professional competency.
- ii. Information on lowest paid posts in the Growth, Environment, Transport and Health and Resources Directorates be shared with the Committee.
- iii. Briefing notes on the following matters be provided to the Committee:
 - a. An update on the National Graduate Management Trainee programme at the county council.
 - b. A note on the definition of lean and agile in public sector and for this to cover aspects of culture and behaviour change.

6. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 9 December 2024 at 10.30am in Committee Room B – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall
Preston

