

MINUTES of the meeting of the **RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 22 June 2023 at Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 18 October 2023.

Elected Members:

- * Nick Darby
- Will Forster
- * Tim Hall
- * David Harmer
- * Edward Hawkins
- * Robert Hughes (Chairman)
- Robert King
- * Steven McCormick (Vice-Chairman)
- * John O'Reilly
- * Becky Rush
- * Lance Spencer
- * Lesley Steeds (Vice-Chairman)
- * Hazel Watson

(* =present at the meeting)

19/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

No apologies received.

20/21 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 24 APRIL 2023 [Item 2]

The minutes of the Resources and Performance Select Committee held on 24 April 2023 were formally agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

21/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None were received.

22/21 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None were received.

23/21 PEOPLE AND CHANGE WORKFORCE UPDATE [Item 5]

Witnesses:

Tim Oliver, Leader of the Council (Lead Member for HR and OD)
Leigh Whitehouse, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources

Shella-Marie Smith, Director for People and Change
Bella Smith, Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance

Tom Holmwood, Head of Resourcing

Key points made in the discussion:

1. The Leader of the Council outlined the main reasons given by people leaving the organisation. First was for a better reward, with 62% of staff paying for Surrey housing costs, and every member of staff had been offered a pay increase for 2023/24 of no less than 4.5%. Second was lack of opportunity and seeking promotion; people did not feel there was clarity in the career path and there was a need to reassure staff that most can move up or across within the organisation. Third was work-life balance and there was a need to reassess the best way of transacting Council business post-pandemic.
2. A Member queried if the 15% target voluntary turnover was ambitious enough and which areas of staffing exceeded the target. The Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance said turnover overall, currently at 14%, compared to a Local Authority average of 22% in a very fluid job market. A balance had to be achieved between stability and avoiding stagnation. Children's social workers were the main problem area, although turnover there was just under 20% compared with just under 30% last summer.
3. A Member asked for clarification on what was meant by 'the Surrey Way'. The Executive Director of Resources explained it was a guiding framework to ensure everyone in the organisation shared the same vision, and culture to support that. Its people element was monitored through Pulse surveys and the People Strategy Performance Board.
4. A Member suggested physical contact was important to build trust amongst colleagues. The Leader of the Council said there was not a one-size-fits-all approach to working and it should be outcomes-focused, looking at whether staff were delivering on expectations and not being prescriptive about how.
5. A Member asked if a cost analysis had been done to understand if increasing salaries could bring down turnover sufficiently to save enough on recruitment to cancel out the cost. The Head of Resourcing said this had not been undertaken but would be considered. The intention was for Connect2Surrey, partly owned by the Council, to become the primary vehicle to recruit interim and contract workers, a shift away from using external agencies which keep 100% of the fees.
6. A Member enquired what percentage of staff who had resigned, if any, had subsequently been persuaded to stay. The Head of Resourcing said this data was not captured but it was not good

practice to offer more money to stay and would likely only delay an already decided departure. The Leader of the Council suggested the process for former staff to rejoin the organisation should be streamlined.

7. A Member questioned if there was sufficient data from the exit surveys to make any meaningful decisions. The Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance recognised they needed to increase the 11% take-up of the surveys, which were introduced last summer.
8. The Committee was assured Surrey County Council was a 'Carer Confident' employer. People with caring responsibilities were given the opportunities of flexible and agile working and this was highlighted at the forefront of job adverts. It was also 'Disabled Confident', meaning people with disabilities who meet essential criteria were guaranteed an interview.

Tim Oliver left at 11.06 am.

9. Every three months quarter of the workforce was asked to give their views of the organisation by participating in the Pulse survey. Current take-up was higher than previously, 37%, and a target of 50% had been set. Bullying was tracked through the Pulse survey, which showed eight per cent of respondents felt they had experienced discrimination in the past year.
10. A Member enquired if there was an overarching policy across Directorates for leaving handovers, after hearing of cases where parents had been emailing their case workers about EHCPs for weeks before realising they had left the organisation. The Director for People and Change informed there was a leaver's checklist on the intranet, but this was clearly not being used consistently. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families contributed that consultants due to look at the end-to-end process in the SEND setting would be alerted to that particular issue.
11. The Chairman considered the average absence rate of 6.7 days a year to be high. A Member questioned why the target, of 7 days, was higher than what had already been achieved. The Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance explained levels had increased locally and nationally since last year, because sickness levels were low during Covid lockdowns when people were not mixing so not picking up germs. Absences were higher than average in some directorates, particularly in adult social care.
12. A Member suggested the Council should be visiting all schools' careers fairs routinely. The Director for People and Change

acknowledged they could share employment opportunities at the Council with students in a less ad hoc way.

13. Asked how HR had managed to reduce the time to hire since September 2022, the Head of Resourcing said they had dealt with an unusually large volume of appointments last year, just shy of 3,800. This had stretched resources and resulted in an increased time to hire, which had since normalised.

Actions/requests for further information:

- 1) Provide a breakdown of voluntary turnover figures for SEND case workers, foster carers, mental health care workers and Highways staff and bank staff (Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance)
- 2) Provide a definition of the Surrey Way and short overview of how achieving it is being measured (Executive Director of Resources)
- 3) Share the analysis of quarter 4 exit survey data in September 2023 (Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance)
- 4) Make the latest Pulse survey data available (Head of Insight, Programmes and Governance)
- 5) Inform Committee of the take-up of career sprints so far (Director for People and Change).

Resolved:

The Resources and Performance Select Committee welcomes the values outlined in the People Strategy and notes the work done by the Recruitment and Retention Transformation Board in Children's Services. The Committee recommends that:

- 1) People and Change help the Committee to monitor the People Strategy's effectiveness by reporting its latest three months of key performance indicators to Committee at each of its quarterly Performance Monitoring sessions.
- 2) People and Change research which Local Authorities in England have a declining voluntary turnover and what they have done to achieve this trend.
- 3) (a) Council policy ensures leavers' final days in post are freed up to leave a proper handover. Number of days will be agreed with the line manager and will depend on the complexity of the role.

(b) Line managers are reminded to consistently ensure that leavers set up an out of office reply on departure, to include their date of leaving and the identity and contact details of their (interim)

successor. This will ensure, for example, that parents always know how to make contact with a new social worker or SEND case officer.

4) (a) People and Change report to the Select Committee, by the end of September 2023, a plan to encourage take-up of exit interviews and to increase the 11 per cent response rate to exit surveys.

(b) Before a member of staff leaves Surrey County Council, they are offered a pre-exit meeting with their line manager to discuss if there are other opportunities within the Council that might better suit them.

5) As part of the budget-setting process, People and Change undertake a cost analysis to determine if increasing salaries with the intention of retaining staff would save enough money on recruitment and agency costs to result in a net financial benefit.

6) An ambitious target is set for HR to complete the time to hire process, with the aim of streamlining the time taken between submitting an appointment form and agreeing a start date.

7) Line managers share opportunities/rights for flexible and agile working with those expressing an interest in working for Surrey County Council and with all staff when they join the workforce.

8) People and Change develop a consistent approach on visiting Surrey schools. Visitors should give verbal advice and distribute leaflets on the range of jobs and apprenticeship schemes on offer at Surrey County Council, making direct links with particular T-Levels, and consider mentoring sixth formers who elect these T-Levels.

9) The seven-day target for sickness absence rate (FTE days per employee) is reduced to the 2021/22 average of six days, bringing it closer to the April 2022 4.6 days average for all industries.

Becky Rush left at 11.58 am.

24/21 EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Sinead Mooney, Cabinet Member for Children and Families (EDI Lead Member)

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Land and Property

Sarah Kershaw, Chief of Staff, and EDI Lead

Glenn Woodhead, Assistant Director for Facilities Management

Nikki Parkhill, Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Jonathan Fisher, Chairman – Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People Chairman, as a person who is blind and wears hearing aids, recounted his experience of visiting the Woodhatch building the week before. He commented on an absence of blue badge parking provision near the main entrance. Visually impaired people without sighted assistance had only a low single chain preventing them from walking into a pond. There was no induction loop working at reception, and no tactile fire exit signs or raised pictograms differentiating between toilets. He told how guide dogs had refused to guide their owners on the stairs because the gaps between them were too large. He was surprised these safety issues had not been addressed after two years in the building.
2. A Member, referring to the Centre for Accessible Environments' audit report of September 2021, asked why only 10 of 48 recommended actions classed as immediate had been carried out. The Cabinet Member for Property and Waste responded that outstanding actions at Dakota and Woodhatch Place had been incorporated into other works scheduled to take place, however some had been delayed while they were reviewed and agreed by the Facilities Management Accessibility Forum, recently formed in response to staff with disabilities calling for more consultation. The forum had influenced design briefs for projects such as increasing door widths and installing toilets with appropriate turning circles for wheelchair users, which have had funding approved. Space prohibited providing 24 blue badge spaces at the main entrance; two would be provided there and the rest by the Chamber entrance. Glazed panels would be erected by the open water. Ninety-four per cent of actions at Quadrant Court had been completed though that building was to be vacated in the near future. A new building being purchased was to be ready to occupy by the end of 2023.
3. Members asked if the Council was breaching the Equality Act in not yet having implemented all recommendations and what the legal, financial and reputational consequences of this were. The Cabinet Member for Property and Waste stated that Woodhatch Place was designed and built to building regulations Approved Document M, which had since been updated but was not retrospective. A Member said the Council's duties and obligations set out in the Equality Act were broader than compliance with Document M and required that reasonable adjustments were made. The Assistant Director for Facilities Management acknowledged it was important they acted upon the issues raised in a reasonable timeframe. He apologised to Mr Fisher for the sub-standard way he had been received into the building. The majority of issues he raised had been passed at the last meeting of the Facilities Management Accessibility Forum and work had already begun on some, for example an accessible toilet near reception and rising wash basins.

4. A Member asked what was being done to get more staff from under-represented groups in senior leadership positions, since both disabled and BAME leadership (pay scale 16+) had been zero for the last three years, and 10.1% of staff, but only 6.5% of senior managers (pay scale 13-15), were BAME. The Director for People and Change said this was an action in the People Strategy and they were participating in Solace's AMPlify programme to support development of diverse talent.
5. In response to a question on racism, the Chief of Staff said following the incident outside the Ashford school in February they had run a number of listening sessions with minority ethnic staff. A key theme was a feeling there was not the same access to career development. These sessions are planned to continue through a new Tea Break initiative developed by Race Equality Matters. A bullying and harassment policy with a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory behaviour has also been introduced and training was due to be rolled out for managers to support them in how to apply it. Outputs from the workforce reviews would be available in November 2023 for race and July 2023 for disability, and a LGBTQ+ review was in procurement. Monitoring of disciplinary processes was continuing to see if underrepresented groups were overrepresented in HR processes, as this may indicate discrimination.
6. There was a reluctance nationally to share data on ethnicity and disability with employers. The Carers' Network highlighted this also applied to carers. This was partly caused by a fear it would have an adverse impact on their workplace treatment or promotion prospects. Senior managers were working on how to build trust and viewed an inclusive culture as an essential priority, particularly at a difficult time for recruitment and retention.
7. The Chief of Staff explained the gender pay gap, which had reduced at the Council to 5.6%, from 11.2% in 2022, was the difference between the average hourly pay of men and women. It arose not because men and women were being paid differently for the same roles, but because there was a tendency for women to carry out lower paid and part time roles, often due to their having other caring responsibilities.

Jonathan Fisher left at 1.10 pm.

Actions/requests for further information:

- 1) Share this year's programme of works, and associated timescales, passed at the meeting of the Facilities Management Accessibility Forum preceding the 22 June select committee meeting (Assistant Director for Facilities Management)

- 2) Provide more information on the ED&I steering group, funded to drive change in VCFS organisations, and the provider appointed to lead the trustee work (Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)
- 3) Share conclusions of June's LGA equality peer review with the Committee (Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)
- 4) Cllr McCormick to share his thinking on deliverables for the ED&I 2024-25 action plan with the Chief of Staff.

Resolved:

The Resources and Performance Select Committee notes the progress and the ambitions in the report and recommends that:

- 1) The ED&I Lead shares the quarterly reporting on the 2023-24 Action Plan with the Select Committee. These reports should include specific responsibilities and timescales.
- 2) The People and Change Directorate and the ED&I Lead use findings from the disabled, minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ workforce reviews to inform plans to enhance recruitment and retention amongst these groups.
- 3) The Chief Executive's Office should (a) work with organisations representing people with lived experience of disability to help them provide work-ready training to people who are disabled and enable them to fill roles at Surrey County Council. The Office should work to remove barriers that prevent people accessing work, and to create opportunities for people to develop skills for the workplace, where needed, and (b) report back to the Committee with timescales for achieving these objectives.
- 4) The Cabinet Member for Property and Waste and Assistant Director for Facilities Management share with the Committee the schedule of reasonable adjustments work currently scheduled and (a) accompany representatives of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People and the Select Committee Chairman on a tour of Woodhatch, Dakota and Fairmount House by the end of September 2023 to identify what accessibility issues are encountered, (b) add these to their schedule of works and make findings available to the Select Committee, (c) commit to ensuring these issues are resolved as soon as is reasonably practicable, (d) advise the Select Committee of progress or delay by its February 2024 meeting and, before then, (e) invite the Select Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Surrey Coalition of Disabled People to inspect work in progress.

- 5) The business case for any acquisition of a new council office must include consultation on its accessibility from people with lived experience of disabilities.

**25/21 PERFORMANCE MONITORING SESSION NOTES 21 FEBRUARY 2023
[Item 7]**

Agreed and noted.

**26/21 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTIONS AND
RECOMMENDATION TRACKER [Item 8]**

A forward work programming session will be held on 3 July 2023.

27/21 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 9]

The Committee noted its next meeting would be held on Wednesday 18 October 2023.

Meeting ended at: 1:36 pm.

Chairman

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