

Contact Officer: Andrea Woodside

KIRKLEES COUNCIL
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Monday 26th June 2023

Present: Councillor Shabir Pandor (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Adam Gregg
Councillor Naheed Mather
Councillor David Hall
Councillor John Lawson

Apologies: Councillor Cathy Scott
Councillor Donald Firth

1 Membership of the Committee

Councillor Gregg substituted for Councillor Taylor.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors D Firth and Scott.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all agenda items would be considered in public session.

5 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

6 Deputation/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were submitted.

7 Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 (Reference to Council)

The Committee received the Pay Policy Statement 2023/2024, prior to its submission to Council on 12 July 2023. It was noted that the report was submitted in accordance with the requirements of Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011, which required the Authority to produce a policy statement concerning the pay of the Authority's Chief Officers.

The Committee were advised that there was sufficient revenue budgetary provision within the approved budget for 2023/2024 to implement the pay policy statement.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Pay Policy Statement be noted and submitted to the meeting of Council on 12 July 2023.

8 Planning Service - Workforce Issues

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of current pressures and challenges facing Planning Services. The report reflected upon a national shortage of engineers and town planners which had resulted in competition amongst local authorities and the private sector to recruit and retain staff.

It was noted that rates of pay were a significant barrier to attracting and retaining experienced staff, particularly those in Grade 10 posts and above and that several vacancies were currently being actively managed to offset falling income. The report advised that customer satisfaction was low based upon the lengthy processing of applications, arising from the very high allocation of caseloads to Officers.

The report set out statistics in terms of current FTE posts, vacancies, leavers and new starters. It was noted that 28 new members of staff had been recruited within the last two years and that whilst the headcount was overall comparable, the periods of vacancies and the impact of recruiting inexperienced staff placed further strain on service provision.

The Committee were advised that an action plan for the service was being developed which included a broad range of actions required to support the effective delivery of planning services. The report set out a number of actions that were being developed to assist in responding to the challenges which included (i) staff retention payments (ii) governance reform (iii) the Local Plan review (iv) staff welfare provision and (v) attracting investment.

The Committee noted the report and discussion took place with regards to the partial success of the payment retention scheme, the implications of refunding of fees due to non-determination, the length of time taken to consider applications and the impact of the current level of vacancies upon service provision. It was noted that planning fees would be increasing this summer, with fees for minor applications increasing by 25% and fees for major applications increasing by a third.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That it be noted that Planning Services will continue to work with Workforce Strategy to explore opportunities to address ongoing challenges to recruitment and retention of staff.