

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 17 JULY 2025

Present: Councillor Emberson (Chair);
Councillors Terry (Vice-Chair), Ennis and Keane

Also Present: Kathryn Cook, Louise Duffield, Kieran McGee, Alison McNamara and Miriam Palfrey.

(Councillor Mpofu-Coles was unable to attend in person, so attended remotely via Microsoft Teams, but did not vote on any of the items, in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972)

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF APPOINTMENT COMMITTEES

The Minutes of Personnel Appointment Committees held on 31 March and 3 April 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. RBC PART TIME WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Committee considered a report that provided an analysis of the Council's Part-time workforce starting with a 'headline' summary as follows:

- **Gender Disparity** – A significantly higher proportion of women worked part-time compared to men (88% versus 12%), this reflected national trends;
- **Job Grade Distribution** – Part-time employees were more likely to be in lower-graded roles, with 76% in RG5 or lower, compared to 57% of full-time employees;
- **Length of Service** – Part-time employees tended to have longer tenure at the Council, with 52% having worked for over 10 years, compared to 35% of full-time staff;
- **Age Variations** – The proportion of full-time versus part-time employees was relatively even across most age groups, except for employees aged 60 and over and those under 29, who showed a stronger preference for part-time work;
- **Minimal Ethnic Disparity** – The likelihood of working part-time did not appear to vary significantly by ethnic group;
- **Disability Representation** – Employees who had declared a disability worked part-time at a similar rate to those who hadn't, indicating no substantial difference in employment patterns related to disability.

The report stated that these trends suggested that part-time employment was influenced most strongly by gender, job-type and career stage, rather than ethnicity or disability status.

Nationally the latest UK Labour Market Statistics had shown that approximately 24% of people were employed on a part-time basis and many employees opted for part-time jobs for personal and professional reasons. One common factor was flexibility: part-time roles

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allowed individuals to balance work with other commitments such as education, caregiving or personal interests and it could be particularly beneficial for parents managing childcare responsibilities, students seeking to fund their studies, or retirees who still wished to remain active in the workforce without the demands of full-time employment. Economic considerations could also play a role because in uncertain job markets, part-time work could provide an income source while allowing individuals to explore multiple opportunities, freelance, or run a personal business. Moreover, organisations could benefit from hiring part-time staff by managing costs and staffing needs efficiently, creating a mutually beneficial arrangement.

The report stated that the proportion of Council employees who were working part-time was broadly in line with the national picture and had been consistent over the previous three years, standing at 23% in 2023 and 22% in 2024 and 2025. Both nationally and within the Council's workforce more women worked part-time than men, 71% nationally and 88% at the Council and research from the TUC had shown that women were three times more likely to work part-time than men. In its Policies the Council was committed to the promotion of flexible working practices in order to realise accommodation efficiencies and to enable employees to balance their home and working lives.

The report included a number of tables that gave a breakdown of the part-time workforce including the distribution of part-time workforce by service area, the top ten job roles with the highest number of part-time employees and distribution by ethnic group, sex, grade, length of service and age.

Finally, the report stated that in summary the Council's part-time workforce reflected both national employment trends and internal organisational priorities, with a steady proportion of employees choosing reduced hours over the previous three years. While flexibility remained a key driver for part-time work, particularly among women, the data highlighted broader patterns regarding role distribution, length of service and pay grades and the findings reinforced the importance of maintaining inclusive and adaptable employment policies that supported staff in balancing work with personal responsibilities.

Resolved: That the analysis of the Council's part-time workforce be noted.

4. REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S CORE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The Committee considered a report presenting four of the 'core' HR Policies which had been under review to ensure that they were fit for purpose and aligned with current ACAS guidance. The four Policies were as follows:

- Bullying and Harassment;
- Grievance;
- Managing Poor Performance;
- Disciplinary Policy.

The report explained that a range of stakeholders and the trades unions had been asked for their input into the four Policies that were under consideration and extensive input had been received from the Council's in-house Employment Lawyer. Each Policy had been discussed and improvements had been suggested, which had then been collated and tested back with

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participants. It had been clear very early on that there was significant agreement amongst stakeholders about where improvements should be made. Many of the proposed improvements had applied to all Policies and their application as apposed to a single Policy; where there were suggestions about specific changes that needed to be made to individual Policies, these had also been captured.

The report stated that final changes were now being incorporated into the four Policies and had been shared with the trade unions. It was believed that the revisions that had been proposed would improve the application of each Policy and that there would be benefits in introducing them as soon as possible. For this reason the report proposed that authority was delegated to the Head of Paid Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee/Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources and the Leader of the Council to approve the changes to the Policies.

Resolved: That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources be authorised to agree the following revised Employment Policies:

- **Bullying and Harassment Policy;**
- **Grievance Policy;**
- **Managing Poor Performance Policy;**
- **Disciplinary Policy.**

subject to the revised policies being circulated to all members of the Personnel Committee for comment before they were agreed.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF BFFC TUPE ON RBC HR POLICIES

The Committee considered a report on the implications of Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) on the Council's HR Policies.

The report explained that Children's Services in Reading had been delivered by BFFC since 1 December 2018 and on 18 January 2025 the Council had agreed to bring Children's Services back in-house by autumn 2025. The transition date for staff and services had been set as 1 October 2025 and BFFC staff would transfer from BFFC to the Council via TUPE (Protection of Employment). A TUPE consultation had been carried out for all Council and BFFC staff between 5 June and 7 July 2025 and the high level proposal for the transition policies had been included within the BFFC consultation document and had stated that Council corporate and HR Policies would, by default, replace BFFC policies.

To facilitate the TUPE of BFFC staff to the Council, all Policies had needed to be reviewed and matched and any gaps addressed. All Policies had been matched and compared to ensure that at transition staff could be informed of any differences and any gaps in provision of Policies could be addressed. Since the creation of the Company, unless otherwise required BFFC had mirrored the Council's HR Policies and therefore there were very few meaningful differences that had been found between BFFC and the Council's HR and Corporate Policies.

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The report stated that all current BFfC HR Policies would be replaced by the equivalent Council Policy, except where there was a contractual element, for example, annual leave, which would be protected and would remain for BFfC staff under TUPE as required by law. Where there was no equivalent Council HR Policy, the BFfC Policy would either cease, or consideration would be given to it being adopted by the Council. It was anticipated that the Council would adopt or update the following Policies:

- Council Fostering Friendly Policy – This would be adapted slightly to clarify the Child Placement leave entitlements upon the placement of a new foster child;
- BFfC Reimbursement of Statutory Fees – This Policy would continue to apply to BFfC staff and the Council would look to review the equivalent Policy for Council staff.

Some Council HR Policies gave BFfC new entitlements and/or requirements they did not previously have, for example, Buying Annual Leave Policy, Volunteering Policy, Working Abroad Policy, Transgender Policy. BFfC staff would be able to take advantage of these Policies from the date of transfer.

Finally, the report stated that all the above implications and changes would be communicated to staff as part of the transition communications and induction plan and the intranet would also be updated to reflect any changes to Policies.

Resolved: That the implications of the TUPE of Brighter Futures for Children be submitted to the Council on 1 October 2025 in respect of HR Policies be noted.

(The meeting closed at 6.52 pm)