

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 20 November 2013
7.00pm to 7.30pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Avey, Clarke, Christine Godwin, Paul Godwin, Irvine and Wicks (Chairman)
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Adrian Gulvin (Substitute for Mackinlay)
- In Attendance:** Elizabeth Benjamin, Senior Lawyer - Litigation
Ralph Edwards, Head of HR
Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer
Carrie McKenzie, Head of Organisational Change
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

544 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

545 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mackinlay.

546 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

547 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

548 Pay and Grade Review

Discussion:

This report provided an update on the Pay and Grade Review Project since the last meeting of the Committee. The Assistant Director, Organisational Services stated that the report provided details of five options for Members' consideration together with a comparison of the implementation and four year costs of options 3, 4 and 5. It was noted that progression within all options would be subject to performance management and not automatic. The proposed principles of the scheme would be: individual assessment against both work related targets and competence; distinction between entry level and experienced staff; fair and equitable and; easy to administer.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, referred to the discussions at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held earlier the same evening, including whether to formally consult on more options and a proposal to extend the consultation period.

The report provided details of the proposed consultation with the outcome of consultation being reported back to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and the Employment Matters Committee on 29 January 2014.

A revised version of the options table, as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, was tabled at the meeting.

Members discussed a number of issues including:

- Extending the consultation period to take account of the Christmas/new year break
- That as many options as possible be formally consulted on
- That option 3 (Appendix 1, page 19 of the Agenda) be amended so that grade E2 sits on pay scales 7-8.

Decision:

The Committee agreed that consultation commence on 25 November 2013 as per the proposed timetable, as set out in Appendix 6 to the report, on options 1, 3, 4 and 5 and the principles of the contribution based pay scheme subject to:

- the consultation period being extended to 20 January 2014 and;
- Option 3 grade E2 being moved from pay scales 6-7 to 7-8.

549 Review of Managing Sickness Absence Policy

Discussion:

This report provided details of a review of the Managing Sickness Absence Policy, following approval of the policy by the Committee on 29 June 2011. It was noted that the Council's sickness absence rates had traditionally been lower than the national average for the public sector and that the revised policy

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would enhance the changes made previously and would allow for more flexible management of sickness absence cases when it was required. The proposed changes to the current policy were set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report, these related to sickness absence triggers, gender re-assignment and plastic surgery, the inclusion of an informal stage within the policy, long term sickness absence, out of service ill health retirement requests and the termination of services on ill health grounds.

Members asked whether gender re-assignment and cosmetic/plastic surgery would be categorised as planned operations. The Head of HR confirmed that this would be the case and he informed the Committee that the Policy would be updated to reflect this.

A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) screening had been undertaken on the revised policy and it was not considered that a full DIA was required.

Decision:

- a) The Committee approved the revised Managing Sickness Absence Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) The Committee agreed that this policy is reviewed in two years time and any proposed changes are referred to this Committee.

550 Whistleblowing Report on Instances - September 2012 - September 2013

Discussion:

This report provided details of the concerns raised under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy between September 2012 – September 2013. It was noted that three matters of concern had been raised during this period as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

The Audit Committee had considered this report on 25 September 2013 and its comments were set out in paragraph 2 of the report.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, informed the Committee that the Council was negotiating with Care First regarding the costs of the introduction of a dedicated whistleblowing telephone line.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

551 Budget Proposals and Implications for Staff

Discussion:

This report provided an update on new reviews and transfers since the last report to Committee (26 September 2013) together with a summary of

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Employment Tribunals lodged. The report provided details of individual reviews together with summary positions with regards to reorganisations in schools and the transfer of schools to academy status. There had been no employment tribunal applications lodged since the last report to Committee. The Head of HR stated that the second sentence in paragraph 5.2 of the report should not have been included in the report.

Members asked why the selection process for the appointment of the new Head of School's Commissioning and Traded Services was ring-fenced. The Head of HR stated that existing at risk staff were given the first opportunity to apply for new positions following a reorganisation.

Decision:

The Committee noted the present position and the support arrangements for staff.

552 Equalities Working Group Update

Discussion:

This report provided details of the meeting of the Equalities Working Group held on 21 October 2013 and referred to a number of issues discussed at the meeting including the Council's 2013 Workplace Equality Submission to Stonewall, the proposed equalities conference planned for Spring 2014, the Two Ticks Accreditation Scheme and the Council's Equality Audit 2013.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

553 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision:

The press and public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt material contained within agenda item 11 (Early Retirements and Severance Payments) because consideration of this matter in public would disclose information falling within paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as specified in agenda item 10 (Exclusion of Press and Public) and, in all the circumstances of the case, the Committee considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

554 Early Retirements and Severance Payments

Discussion:

This report provided information on early retirements and severance decisions between June 2013 – September 2013.

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Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

Chairman

Date:

Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332509

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

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