

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Thursday, 17 April 2014
7.00pm to 7.33pm

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, Mackinlay and Wicks (Chairman)

In Attendance: Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Tim Silver, Interim Employee Relations Manager

1006 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 18 February 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

1007 Apologies for absence

There were none.

1008 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman stated that the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) held earlier the same evening had not been attended by any trade union representatives, therefore, the JCC had not formally considered the main agenda item (Pay Progression Scheme).

The Chairman and Committee Members thanked Paula Charker, Employee Relations Manager, who had recently retired, for her exemplary service at Medway Council and asked that their thanks be passed on to her.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, introduced Tim Silver, Interim Employee Relations Manager, to the Committee.

1009 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

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Other interests

The Chairman declared a personal and potentially financial interest on behalf of any officers present affected by the proposals, regarding agenda item 5 (Pay Progression Scheme).

1010 Pay Progression Scheme

Discussion:

This report provided details of the Pay Progression Scheme following the approval of the Pay and Grade Scheme at Full Council on 20 February 2014. The report set out the proposed Medpay Progression Award Scheme which had been subject to consultation, including meetings with the trade unions and workshops for employees. The report also included comments raised by trade unions and employees together with management responses and details of any subsequent amendments to the proposed scheme.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, updated the Committee on the issue of staff voluntarily accepting new contracts and of the 2,800 letters sent out, 94 staff were still being chased for a response, with four appeals against dismissal and five employees signing the new contract whilst wishing to retain the right to make a claim. She stated that whilst the trade unions remained against the principle of performance related pay, there had been negotiations with them on the scheme. She also referred to the employees workshops, the details of which were set out in Appendix 2 to the report (tabled at the meeting).

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, informed the Committee that the assessment levels had been reduced from four to three as a result of the consultation process on the basis that level 4 (unsatisfactory performance) was already covered by the Capability Procedure. She stated that those employees on the top of the grade may now be able to receive a one-off payment if their performance was excellent and that Soulbury employees and Local Negotiation Framework Agreement (LNFA) employees would be included in the scheme. She also gave details of the training programme in place for managers.

The Committee discussed a number of issues including the following:

- Further information on the training programme.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, explained that the managers' training programme would commence in May with a half day session to explain the scheme. This would be backed up with "espresso" training sessions and a second training session later in the year which would concentrate on undertaking employee assessments. Employees would be invited to attend briefing sessions on the scheme.

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- The work of the Member level Pay Review Working Group.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, confirmed that the scheme took account of the views of the Working Group.

- The capacity of the organisation to successfully deliver the scheme.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, confirmed that the training arrangements were in place for managers to implement the scheme.

- The need for a review back to this Committee on the first year implementation of the scheme.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, confirmed that a report could be submitted to this Committee.

- The need to ensure that the scheme and its appendices were fully proofread before final publication.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, confirmed that the Scheme would be fully proofread before final publication.

Decision:

- (a) The Employment Matters Committee noted the comments from the trade unions and employees and the amendments made to the original proposals.
- (b) The Employment Matters Committee agreed the Medpay Policy Statement and Competency Schemes, as set out in Appendices 1 to 1C to the report to be implemented from 1 July 2014, once the training of managers has been undertaken.
- (c) The Employment Matters Committee agreed the implementation of a pay progression scheme related to performance for Soulbury and Local Negotiation Framework Agreement (LNFA) staff and delegate authority for the discussion on the detailed arrangements to the Assistant Director, Organisational Services.
- (d) The Employment Matters Committee agreed that a report be submitted back to this Committee reviewing the implementation of the Pay Progression Scheme after 12 months (July 2015).

1011 Smoke Free Policy

Discussion:

This report provided details of the revised smoke free policy which would replace the previous smokers' policy and encompassed the range of

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responsibilities that Medway Council had as an employer, service provider and exemplar in promoting healthy lifestyles amongst local residents. It was noted that in 2013 responsibility for Public Health passed from NHS to local authorities, giving Medway Council the lead role locally in reducing harm from tobacco. As such, Medway Council was responsible for improvement and protection of the health of people living and working in Medway. The main revision to this policy centred around the issue of electronic cigarettes.

Members discussed a number of issues including the following:

- The relationship between this policy and the law
- The extent to which this policy would apply
- Whether the wording in paragraph 7.1 of the policy was sufficient
- The role that electronic cigarettes may have played in people giving up smoking
- The research referenced in this policy with particular reference to OPCS Series DH2, No.17, Mortality Statistics Cause, 1990.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, confirmed that this policy would apply, for example, to the use of Council owned vehicles, that the policy was not meant to criminalise employees and whilst electronic cigarettes were not part of the smoking ban, they could not be used on Council premises.

Decisions:

- (a) The Employment Matters Committee approved the revised Smoke Free Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report subject to paragraph 7.1 of the Policy being amended as follows:

All visitors and contractors should be made aware of Medway Council's Smokefree Policy and ~~should be asked to~~ must adhere to it during their time on Council premises.

- (b) The Employment Matters Committee agreed that this policy is reviewed in two years' time and any proposed changes are referred to this Committee.
- (c) The Employment Matters Committee requested that a report be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board which provides more recent research into smoking as the guidance to the Smoke Free Policy included guidance from as long ago as 1990.

1012 Budget Proposals and Implications for Staff

Discussion:

This report provided an update on new reviews and transfers since the last report to Committee (6 February 2014). 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.

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The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, informed the Committee that subsequent reports to this Committee would list ongoing reviews from April 2014 onwards.

Decision:

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

1013 Early Retirement and Severance Payments

Discussion:

This report provided information on early retirements and severance decisions between October 2013 – February 2014.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

Chairman

Date:

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