

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 25 June 2014
7.00pm to 7.38pm

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: Elizabeth Benjamin, Senior Lawyer - Litigation
Carrie McKenzie, Head of H R and Organisational Change
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Tim Silver, Employee Relations Manager
Nicola Smith, Democratic Services Officer

82 Record of meetings

The record of the meeting held on 17 April 2014 and the record of the Joint Meeting of all Committees held on 14 May 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct

83 Apologies for absence

There were none.

84 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

85 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

86 Review of Disciplinary Procedure

Discussion:

The Interim Employee Relations Manager introduced this report and informed the Committee that the procedure had been revised to incorporate minor changes to job titles, include an expiry date for informal reprimands (in line with best practice), and to include a statement on covert recordings, which was added as an explicit example of Gross Misconduct.

The Committee discussed a number of issues including the following:

- Whether the consultation period was adequate and if there was a set period for consulting on changes to policy and procedures;

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services confirmed that consultation periods varied depending on the complexity of proposed changes. She had received a request that the consultation period be extended, as one trade union in particular (Unison), wished to consider the policy in more detail. She advised the Committee that the changes to the policy were relatively minor which was why the consultation period had been set at just 2 weeks, however comments on the procedure would be welcomed from the union concerned, and the policy could be brought back to this Committee if further changes were needed.

- Whether the conditions regarding covert recording related equally to both employer representatives and employees; and whether any recording would be permitted at a disciplinary hearing.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services confirmed that the conditions relating to covert recording applied equally to both employer representatives and employees. She also advised that the recording of disciplinary appeal hearings would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as, if requested to assist someone with a disability, and with the agreement of both parties.

- Whether sleeping on duty, as referred to in Appendix 1 is permitted.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services advised that there were specific sleep-in arrangements in place in residential units.

- A suggestion to use 'track changes' on documents to enable Members to ascertain the detail of the proposed policy and/or procedural changes.

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Decision:

The Employment Matters Committee agreed:

- (a) the revised Disciplinary Procedure as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) that this Procedure be reviewed in two years time with any proposed changes referred to this Committee;
- (c) that timeframes for consultation be discussed at a future Joint Consultative Committee meeting.

87 Review of Capability Procedure

Discussion:

The Interim Employee Relations Manager introduced this report and informed the Employment Matters Committee that the procedure had been revised to incorporate minor changes to job titles, to include a statement on the admissibility of covert recordings at any of the meetings or hearings within the procedure that could be regarded as Gross Misconduct.

Members noted that the same general issues relating to the previous item on the Review of Disciplinary Procedure were also relevant to this report.

Decision:

The Committee agreed:

- (a) the revised Disciplinary Procedure as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) that this Procedure be reviewed in two years time with any proposed changes referred to this Committee;
- (c) that timeframes for consultation be discussed at a future Joint Consultative Committee meeting.

88 Review of Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy

Discussion:

The Interim Employee Relations Manager introduced this report and informed the Employment Matters Committee that the revised policy incorporated changes to Internal and External Support Networks, included all aspects of domestic abuse, not just domestic violence, and also included a checklist for Managers to use when discussing this with a team member.

Members discussed the report and raised a number of issues including:

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- Recognition that the policy ties in with the Council's priorities relating to tackling domestic abuse;
- Acknowledging that in addition to the statistics on female victims of abuse, the policy should include information on male victims;
- The risk of containing named officers as mentors and appointed persons which could become out of date and result in delays in staff reaching people who can help them.

Decision:

The Employment Matters Committee agreed:

- (a) the revised Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the decisions below;
- (b) to move the details of named officers into an appendix, so that it could be updated regularly without requiring Committee approval;
- (c) that the policy be reviewed in two years time with any proposed changes referred to this Committee.

89 Use of Consultants

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced this report on the use of consultants as a resource within the Council. Members noted that approval from the Human Resources Team had to be attained before an external consultant was appointed to ensure appropriate assurance checks and measures were in place.

Decision:

The Committee noted the information within the report.

90 Social Worker Employer Standards

Discussion:

The Head of H R and Organisational Change introduced this report which considered the introduction of a new set of national standards for employers of social workers. She advised the Employment Matters Committee that the Local Government Association (LGA) working on behalf of the Social Work Reform partners had redeveloped and re-launched the standards. She also stated that

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the standards would be complementary to the work of Medway's Social Work Academy which had received national recognition for offering a robust and challenging array of professional development opportunities.

Members of the Employment Matters Committee welcomed the proposals and raised a number of issues which included the following:

- Engagement of social workers in adopting the standards. The Head of H R and Organisational Change confirmed that focus groups had been held and that the LGA had also presented to staff groups.
- Effect of the employer standard on social worker performance. It was noted that the application of the eight standards requires evidence of outcomes that demonstrate improvement in performance.

Decision:

The Employment Matters Committee endorsed signing up to the Standards for employers of Social Workers in England.

91 Budget Proposals and Implications for Staff

Discussion:

The Head of H R and Organisational Change introduced this report. She explained that the report was a standard item reported to each meeting of the Committee. She drew the Committee's attention to the new reviews and transfers since the previous report which had been considered at the meeting of the Employment Matters Committee on 17 April 2014.

Decision:

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

92 Equalities Working Group Update

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced this report on the outcomes of the Equalities Working Group meeting held on 28 April 2014. She drew the Employment Matters Committee's attention to the recent results of the Council's submission in relation to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index which showed an improvement by 53 places and that the Council had missed the top 100 employers by just 4 points.

Decision:

The Employment Matters Committee noted the report.

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Chairman

Date:

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