

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 28 January 2015
7.00pm to 7.35pm

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, Mackinlay and Wicks (Chairman)

In Attendance: Elizabeth Benjamin, Principal Lawyer
Carrie McKenzie, Head of HR and Organisational Change
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer

710 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 19 November 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

711 Apologies for absence

None

712 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none

713 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

714 Pay Negotiations 2015/2016

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced this report which covered the progress on the annual pay negotiations with the trade unions and

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made recommendations to full Council for the payment of an annual cost of living award and performance related payments.

The Trade Union pay claim was in two parts:

Claim 1: That Medway Council recognises and commits to the National Living Wage for all council employed staff.

Claim 2: An across the board pay increase of 2.3% (current RPI).

The pay claim had been discussed with the trade unions at the meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 21 and 28 January 2015.

Tabled at the meeting was a paper giving details of information requested at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 21 January 2015. This covered comparative information about staff turnover and salaries and also the variance between current range 1 entry salary with the national minimum wage rate and the implications of increasing the lowest salary to point 8 (£13,189) and how this compared to the minimum wage.

The Assistant Director advised that the council were unlikely to be able to offer any more than a 1% increase to the current bill (a budget increase of around £800,000). The Trade Unions had been invited to consider the split of the 1% between a cost of living increase and performance pay and to consider improvements to non-pay elements of the employee remuneration package. The proposal from the Council was that of the possible £800,000 available, 60% would be allocated to cost of living and 40% to performance. The cost of introducing the Living Wage was £324,000 pa, involving 379 employees.

A member commented that the position of the Labour Group was that the Council should agree a 1% cost of living pay increase with no performance pay element and that the Council should also commit to the Living Wage, at a total cost of £1.124m. For a relatively small extra investment, the Council could help a large number of employees and also send out a message that the Council cared about its staff. He argued that the authority could afford to pay the Living Wage and noted that many others facing similar financial difficulties had agreed to this. It was time to reflect on the concerns raised by the trade unions and employees and recognise that years of pay restraint had affected morale and this inevitably had an effect on services to the public. The proposal to award a 0.6% cost of living increase represented a miniscule sum.

In response to a question from a member, the Assistant Director advised there were less than 100 employees who were engaged under nationally negotiated terms and conditions of employment and entitled to receive pay increases and automatic incremental pay progression. The cost of this was around £40-50,000 pa and this sum would be met from the proposed £800,000.

The Committee were advised that removing the lowest pay point would affect around 300 employees and would cost approximately £35,000 – again this would need to be met from the £800,000 available.

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In response to a question about numbers of redundancies the Assistant Director advised that in the last 18 months there had been 56 redundancies (both compulsory and voluntary) out of 426 people at risk of redundancy.

A member then moved that full Council be recommended to allocate £800,000 to pay rises, to be distributed in accordance with paragraph 4.2. of the report and that, further, the lowest salary point be removed. This was put to the vote and carried. Councillors Paul Godwin and Christine Godwin requested that their votes against the motion be recorded.

Decision:

The Committee recommended to full Council that £800,000 be allocated to pay rises and that this is distributed in accordance with paragraph 4.2 of the report, i.e. 60% allocated to cost of living and 40% to performance, and that, also, the lowest salary point be removed.

715 Pay Policy Statement 2015/2016

Discussion:

The Assistant Director Organisational Services introduced this report which dealt with the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2015/2016 in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Decision:

The Committee noted the Pay Policy Statement 2015/2016, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and referred it to Full Council for agreement.

716 Budget Proposals and Implications for Staff

Discussion:

The Head of HR and Organisational Change introduced this report which covered new reviews and transfers since the last report

Decision:

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

717 Review of Internet, E-Mail and Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Discussion:

The Head of HR and Organisational Change introduced this report which sought agreement to revised Internet, E-Mail, and Social Media Policy and Guidelines.

In response to a question, members were advised that the trade unions had been consulted about the revised policy. Noting that the cover report did not make this clear, it was agreed that in future all reports of a similar nature should always set out what consultation had taken place.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- (1) approve the revised Internet, E-Mail, and Social Media Policy and Guidelines as set out in Appendix 1 to the report
- (2) review the policy in two years time and that any proposed changes be referred to this Committee.

718 Introduction of a Shared Parental Leave Policy and Guidelines

Discussion:

The Head of HR and Organisational Change introduced a report which sought members' agreement to introduce a Shared Parental Leave policy to meet the requirements of The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014.

The Committee were advised that officers did not expect large number of staff to make requests for shared parental leave. A member noted that the policy asked employees intending to take shared parental leave to give their line manager at least eight weeks' notice. In response to a question, officers assured members that the policy would be applied in a compassionate and common sense manner where circumstances meant eight weeks' notice was not reasonable or possible.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to

- (1) approve the revised Shared Parental Leave Policy and Guidelines as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (2) review the policy in two years time and that any proposed changes be referred to this Committee.

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719 Exclusion of the press and public

Decision:

The Committee agreed to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the exempt material contained within agenda item 10 (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 12 (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.

720 Early Retirements and Severance Payments

Discussion:

The Assistant Director – Organisational Services introduced a report detailing all decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the period 1 August 2014 to 31 December 2014.

In response to a question, the Committee were advised that the capitalised costs of early retirement were unavoidable and were met by the Council in one financial year.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Chairman

Date:

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