

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 3 February 2016
7.05pm to 7.30pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Avey, Hicks, Saroy and Wicks (Chairman)

In Attendance: Estelle Bonney Andrews, Lawyer People Team
Carrie McKenzie, Head of HR and Organisational Change
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

730 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fearn, Godwin and Murray.

731 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 2 December 2015 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

732 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

733 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Saroy declared an interest in relation to item 5 (Pay Negotiations 2016/17) and item 6 (Review of Pay Progression Scheme) as she had family members who were employed by Medway Council. She withdrew from the meeting for the discussion and decision on these items.

734 Pay Negotiations 2016/17

Discussion:

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The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress of the annual pay negotiations with the Trade Unions. The report put forward a recommended proposal in relation to the allocation of pay increases for consideration by the Committee to forward to full Council for determination. It was clarified that the amount of budget allocated for this purpose was also a matter for Full Council when it sets the 2016/17 budget at its meeting on 25 February 2016.

She explained that at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in January 2016 there had been discussion around the level of increase being recommended in relation to the cost of living allowance (COLA), and it was confirmed that the Council's proposal had been amended to apply a 0.60% pay award increase to COLA and a 0.40% increase to performance, as opposed to the original proposal which reversed the split.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services also referred to the pay claims from the Trade Unions relating to increasing the salaries of the lowest paid staff. She confirmed the Council's commitment to pay the statutory living wage of £7.20 per hour and that the costs of meeting this and other contractual obligations was c£200K. Revised payscales had been circulated, which reflected an increase to the top of salary Range 1 and the entry salary at Range 2 to £15,241 per annum (equivalent to £7.90 per hour). This represented an increase in salary for approximately 230 members of staff.

It was added that the Trade Unions wished to ballot their members on the proposals. Timescales had been discussed with the Trade Unions, who had been made aware that the outcome of the ballots needed to be concluded in order to report to Full Council on 25 February 2016.

Furthermore, the Assistant Director, Organisational Services added that at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting, held earlier in the evening, officers had agreed to add to their recommendation to the Committee that as part of the 2016/17 proposed pay award, the terms and conditions relating to Part 2 of the NJC Green Book would remain unchanged.

Decision:

- (1) The Committee recommended Full Council that money is allocated from the budget to implement the following: -
- 0.60% paid as a general cost of living increase (COLA);
 - 0.40% paid in accordance with the performance arrangements as detailed under MedPay;
(In accordance with MedPay, colleagues who were at the top of their current pay range would receive the COLA increase only);
 - To increase the top of salary Range 1 to £15,241 per annum (equivalent to £7.90 per hour). The entry salary at Range 2 would be similarly matched.

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- (2) That currently no alterations be made to the terms and conditions set out in Part 2 of the NJC Green Book.

735 Review of Pay Progression Scheme

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced the report which updated the Committee on the implementation arrangements of the proposed change to the MedPay policy relating to staff members who had been absent for a period greater than six months. The Trade Unions had requested that current arrangements be retained, where staff absent for sickness reasons are automatically assessed at a Level 2 and would therefore (subject to other qualifying factors) be entitled to receive any performance related pay increase.

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services explained that it was accepted that this proposal only affected a very small number of staff and therefore the Council had agreed to recommend retention of the current arrangements.

Decision:

The Committee: -

- (1) noted the proposal made by the Trade Unions and agreed in principle by Officers;
- (2) agreed to retain the existing arrangements in place to award a Level 2 performance rating for employees who are absent for a period not less than six months in any performance review period (including absence due to long term sickness) and noted that this aspect of the policy will be reviewed as part of any future review of the MedPay arrangements.

736 Pay Policy Statement 2016/2017

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced the report which provided the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17, ahead of its consideration at Full Council. She referred to the relationship between remuneration of Assistant Directors and above and other officers and confirmed the ratio of the pay of the highest and lowest paid member of staff was 11.12, which was a reduction from the 12.3 ratio of 2015/16 and was well below the recommendation from the Will Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector, which suggested this ratio should be no more than 20.

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Decision:

The Committee noted the Pay Policy Statement 2016/17, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, and referred the statement to Full Council for agreement.

737 Benchmarking of Apprenticeship Training Allowances

Discussion:

The Head of HR and Organisational Change introduced the report which provided the Committee with information on the training allowances for apprenticeships paid across local authorities in Kent and the workforce age profiling for Medway's current apprentices. It was added that apprenticeship allowances are reviewed nationally every October and the Council would look at any recommendations from the annual reviews and report back to the Committee with any proposed changes.

Members then raised a number of comments and questions, including:

- **Varying allowances with age** – in response to a question about whether Medway would consider adopting Gravesham Borough Council's approach of varying allowances according to age ranges, (which was demonstrated on page 79 of the agenda) the Head of HR and Organisational Change confirmed that as a unitary authority, Medway Council was able to provide more opportunities for apprenticeships and was therefore able to attract more candidates. However, this would be kept under review and could be introduced in the future if further incentives were needed to increase interest.
- **Services where apprenticeships schemes were being implemented** – in response to a question about within which services most apprenticeship schemes were based, it was confirmed there were currently 54 apprentices within Medway Council, the majority of which were based in business administration roles or within Leisure Services.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and agreed that the allowances be reviewed in October 2016 and reported back to this Committee with any recommended changes.

738 Proposed Reorganisations

Discussion:

The Head of HR and Organisational Change introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on current and new organisational reviews and transfers, since the previous report in December 2015. It was confirmed that the Council made every effort to support staff during

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reorganisations through strong communication and the provision of Care First (a counselling and information service) and redeployment opportunities were provided to affected staff wherever possible.

The level of support provided to affected staff in relation to reorganisations was welcomed by Members.

Decision:

The Committee noted the present position and support arrangements for staff in relation to proposed reorganisations.

739 Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies: Report on Instances September 2014 – September 2015

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services introduced the report which advised the Committee about the nature of concerns raised, between September 2014 and September 2015, under the Council's Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies. This report had also been considered by the Audit Committee on 12 January 2016.

In response to a question about whether there was enough awareness of how to whistleblow due to the small number of cases reported, the Assistant Director explained that there was regular communication campaigns across the organisation via emails, leaflets and posters to highlight the opportunity to raise concerns and whistleblowing officers were available to assist individuals when raising concerns. She added that the number of recorded incidents in Medway, in relation to whistleblowing, were similar when compared with other organisations.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

740 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt material relating to agenda items 12 because consideration of these matters 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 11, and, in all the circumstances of the case, the Committee considers that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

741 Early Retirements and Severance Payments

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Discussion:

The Committee considered a report which set out all decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

Chairman

Date:

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