

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 30 November 2016
7.00pm to 7.42pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Godwin, Hicks, Khan, Iles, Wicks (Chairman) and Williams

In Attendance: Carrie McKenzie, Chief People Officer
Tim Silver, Assistant Head of HR
Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Trainor, Assistant Head of HR
Solicitor

485 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Avey.

486 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 7 September 2016 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

487 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

488 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

489 Pay Negotiations 2017/18

Discussion:

The Chief People Officer introduced a report which covered the progress on the annual pay negotiations with the trade unions for the financial year 2017/2018.

Unison had submitted a pay claim on 3 November asking for a 3% consolidated increase on all salary points and allowances and a minimum wage of £10 per hour. The Chief People Officer advised that the protocol for pay negotiations stipulated that a joint claim from Unison and GMB should be submitted in October and as there was as yet no claim from GMB there was not yet a joint claim from the Unions. The cost of implementing the Unison pay claim equated to £2.5m excluding on costs, equivalent to adding a further 3.1% to the current pay bill.

A supplementary report had also been circulated updating Members on the increases to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage announced in the Government's Autumn Budget Statement, which would take effect from 1 April 2017.

A Member referred to comments made earlier at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) by Trade Union representatives about the impact on the morale of staff as a result of on-going pay restraint. As reference had been made at the JCC meeting to some of the results of the recent staff survey, it was requested that the full results of the survey should be provided to the Committee. A request was made for information about areas where the Council was experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff and also how many staff, in relation to the total number of staff, had benefited in pay and non pay terms from the Medpay PDR awards. The point was made that some Members did not support the current system whereby the pay award included both the cost of living increase and performance related pay and believed these should be treated as separate issues. The Chief People Officer undertook to provide the information requested for the next meeting.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

490 Review of Apprenticeship Training Allowances

Discussion:

Further to a decision in February 2016 to review the allowances paid to apprentices (see minute no.736), Members considered a report which updated the Committee on the recent statutory increase to the Apprentice Training Allowance and National Minimum Wage rates and gave an overview of the Apprentice Levy that the Government was introducing in April 2017.

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Following questions from Members, it was clarified that, regardless of age, all apprentices in their first year were paid the National Minimum Wage (currently £125.80 per week). After the first year they were paid the rate applicable to their age.

A Member queried whether the differential between Level 2 and 3 was sufficient to recognise the increase in responsibilities given that an apprentice on Level 3 would only earn £4.20 per week more than someone on Level 2 while the difference between Level 3 and Level 4 was £30 per week. The Chief People Officer replied that the Council's investment in training was greater for a Level 3 apprentice than a Level 2. In response a Member noted that the same would apply in relation to Level 4 compared to Level 3.

Members agreed that a report should be submitted on how many apprentices were at Level 2 and 3, including their ages.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) endorsed the proposal to make no change to the Apprentice Training Allowance other than where there is a statutory requirement to do so;
- b) agreed that these allowances are reviewed in October 2017 with a report back to Committee with any recommended changes, and;
- c) asked for a further report on the numbers and ages of apprentices on Level 2 and 3.

491 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised that the Modern Slavery Act 2015 required the Council to publish a publicly available modern slavery and human trafficking statement, reiterating the Council's on-going commitment to understanding modern slavery risks; and ensuring that there was no modern slavery in the Council or within its supply chain.

Commenting that the greatest risk to the Council came from external organisations who were part of the supply chain, and noting that the Council would regularly monitor lists of high risk countries, a Member asked how this list was established and how it would be monitored. The Chief People Officer advised that the list was provided to the Council on an annual basis and the supply chain would be checked against this annually.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking set out in Appendix A to the report.

492 Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies: Report on Instances September 2015-September 2016

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised Members about the nature of concerns raised, between September 2015 and September 2016, under the Council's Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

493 Proposed Reorganisations

Discussion:

Members considered a report which covered new reviews and transfers since the last report.

Referring to the decision to prepare Medway Integrated Youth Services for future outsourcing, a Member asked what the latest position was. The Chief People Officer advised that Cabinet had agreed at its meeting held on 22 November 2016 not to award a contract following a tendering exercise and to look at a business case for retaining the service in house.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the present position and the support arrangements for staff.

Chairman

Date:

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