

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 4 December 2019
7.05pm to 7.23pm

Record of the meeting

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

- Present:** Councillors: Carr, Fearn (Chairman), Hackwell, Khan, Mahil and Prenter
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Barrett (Substitute for Thompson)
- In Attendance:** Vicky Nutley, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Carrie McKenzie, Assistant Director - Transformation
Samantha Beck-Farley, Head of HR
Nicola Trainor, Assistant Head of HR
Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Parker, Legal Services

473 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Thompson.

474 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2019 was agreed and signed by the Chairman.

475 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

476 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

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Other interests

Councillors Khan and Mahil disclosed that they were members of the GMB. Councillor Prenter disclosed that he was a member of ASLEF but noted that this union had no dealings with the Council.

477 Pay negotiations 2020/21

Discussion:

The Assistant Director-Transformation introduced a report on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2020/2021. She advised that the Council had received a pay claim from UNISON which consisted of four elements:

- a 7% increase on all pay points over 2 years (3.5% per year).
- a 35 hour working week (no decrease to salary)
- a commitment to reassess job profiles
- a return to National Pay Bargaining.

Members were advised that, at the earlier meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee, GMB had clarified that they supported UNISON's pay claim.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report, the progress made to date under the Pay Negotiations Protocol, and the clarification from the GMB that they supported UNISON's pay claim.

478 Proposal to Include the Seven Principles of Public Life in the Employee Code of Conduct

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised that, following an internal audit report on ethics it was proposed that the Seven Principles of Public Life be included into the current Employee Code of Conduct policy. This would align the Employee Code of Conduct to the Member Code of Conduct. The policy had also been brought up to date with some minor changes.

Members noted that, at the earlier meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee, the Assistant Director-Transformation had undertaken to clarify whether the Seven Principles applied to local government employees at all levels of the organisation.

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Decision:

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Employee Code of Conduct is amended, as set out in appendix 1 of the report, including adding the Seven Principles of Public Life as detailed at Paragraph 3.2 of the report.

479 Family Friendly Policies Update

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised that, as part of Medway Council's commitment to being a Family Friendly employer, a series of improvements were being proposed to ensure the Council kept up to date with current ACAS guidelines and standard good practice. These included revisions to the Parental Leave Policy and Shared Parental Leave Policy, Maternity and Paternity Policy, and additional entitlement and guidelines relating to employees going through In Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

Members welcomed the proposals and queried various aspects including whether the IVF guidelines also applied to a partner of an employee receiving IVF treatment, whether maternity leave would apply in the event of a still birth and asked for details of the response from UNISON to the proposals.

The Head of HR advised that the IVF guidelines would apply to partners and this would be made clearer in the policy. UNISON had made the same point about still births and she was looking to develop the maternity policy to also include neo-natal care. As part of a separate and wider piece of work, she was discussing with UNISON the Council's policies generally where they related to disability and carers.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) approved the proposed changes to the Shared Parental Leave Policy (as set out in Appendix A to the report);
- b) approved the proposed changes to the Parental Leave Policy (as set out in Appendix C to the report);
- c) approved the proposal to allow for the provision of Special Leave for employees to attend medical appointments related to IVF treatment (as set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report), and also the inclusion of the guidance on IVF treatment, as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report, to the Maternity and Paternity Policy (Appendix D to the report), and;
- d) asked for a report on the outcome of the discussions with UNISON about the Council's policies where they relate to disability and carers.

480 Organisational Change

Discussion:

Members considered a report which covered new reviews and transfers for the period 31 May 2019 to 31 October 2019.

Decision:

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

481 Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies: Report on Instances between September 2018 - September 2019

Discussion:

Members considered a report on the nature of concerns raised, between September 2018 and September 2019, under the Council's Whistleblowing, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies.

In response to questions the Assistant Director-Administration advised that the concern raised under the whistleblowing policy about financial irregularities related to Medway Commercial Group, details of when the investigation into concerns about racial discrimination would be provided outside the meeting and employees would be made aware of the policies by a variety of means including the induction process and via the intranet and there would also be more of a focus on ensuring staff working in remote sites were made aware.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

482 Early Retirement and Severance Payments

Discussion:

This report detailed all decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 August 201

Decision:

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this report until the next meeting so that the costs to the Council of staff made redundant or who had taken early retirement, as set out in the report, could be clarified.

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Chairman

Date:

Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332817

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk