

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Employment Matters Committee**  
**Wednesday, 29 January 2020**  
**7.00pm to 7.34pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

- Present:** Councillors: Carr, Fearn, Hackwell, Mahil and Prenter
- Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Curry (Substitute for Khan)  
Sylvia Griffin (Substitute for Thompson)
- In Attendance:** Samantha Beck-Farley, Head of HR  
Wayne Hemingway, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Carrie McKenzie, Assistant Director - Transformation  
Vicky Nutley, Assistant Head of Legal Services  
Mark Parker, Legal Services

**617 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Khan and Thompson.

**618 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2019 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**619 Chairman's Announcement**

The Chairman informed the Committee that Carrie McKenzie, Assistant Director Transformation, would be leaving the Council's employment in February to take up a role at Moat Housing Association.

The Chairman paid tribute to her and thanked her, on behalf of the Committee, for her support both to the Committee and the Council since 2011, and wished her well in her new job.

**620 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

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### 621 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

#### Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

#### Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

#### Other interests

Councillor Mahil disclosed that he was a member of the GMB.

Councillor Prenter disclosed that he was a member of ASLEF but noted that this union had no dealings with the Council.

### 622 Pay Negotiations 2020/21

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2020/2021. The Assistant Director Transformation advised the Committee that the last opportunity to consider proposals ahead of the final determination of the pay award at Full Council on 20 February 2020.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken on the pay negotiations, as set out in Appendix 6 to the report.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that:

- a) £639,931 is allocated for pay awards and that this is distributed as follows:
  - 0.60% paid as a general cost of living increase;
  - 0.40% paid in accordance with the performance arrangements as detailed under MedPay.
- b) authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to agree the competency based awards for staff assessed under MedPay at Levels 1A, 1B and 2.
- c) that the level 3 apprentice salary be increased to £165 per week with effect from 1 April 2020.

## 623 Employee Engagement Survey 2019

### Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding the findings of the Employee Engagement Survey 2019 and proposed actions. The Assistant Director Transformation advised the Committee of some of the key issues arising from the survey including mental health issues, skills and equipment, as well as Medpay and PDRs.

Committee members then raised a number of comments and questions, which included:

**Communications and engagement** – whether the rate of 47% was considered acceptable. The Assistant Director Transformation stated that this had increased from 34% in 2017, and she gave examples of the Corporate Management Team's efforts to improve on this, including by being more visible through attending more briefing sessions in the Council's satellite sites.

**Mental Health** – it was noted that less than half of people who had responded to the survey felt that the Council supported those with mental health issues well. The Assistant Director Transformation confirmed that this was a key focus arising from the survey. She also informed the Committee that the Council had signed up to the mental health pledge (Time to Change) in support of this. The Head of HR informed the Committee that work was also ongoing with Occupational Health regarding staff with mental health issues.

**Negative issues arising from the survey** – in response to a question, the Assistant Director Transformation informed the Committee that a number of issues would be looked into including the recruitment process, ICT equipment as well as the need to reengage with the LGBTQ Forum, Black Workers Forum and Disabled Workers Forum.

**Car parks** – The Assistant Director Transformation undertook to refer the issue of a request for contactless car payment functionality in Council car parks to relevant officers.

**Pay and reward issues** – In response to a question on what could be done to improve satisfaction levels, the Assistant Director Transformation informed the Committee that these issues would be considered at Focus Groups.

**PDRs** – in response to a question, the Assistant Director Transformation informed the Committee that every member of staff who needed a PDR would have had one and the reason why this figure was not 100% could be explained by a number of factors, including those staff not under the Medpay provisions, staff on maternity leave or sick leave, and those staff who had worked for the Council for less than six months.

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**Career Development** – in response to a question, the Assistant Director Transformation explained that there were a number of issues which could affect career development but the impact of the moratorium on training budgets would be looked into.

**Response rate** – in response to a question, the Assistant Director Transformation stated that the industry average response rate for staff surveys was 26% so the response rate of 48% compared favourably. However, staff would always be further encouraged to respond to these surveys.

**Motivation** – in response to a question on the levels of motivation, the Assistant Director Transformation stated that she was pleased with the results of the survey but that there was always room for improvement.

**Use of apps to assess staff wellbeing** – in response to a question the Assistant Director stated that her preference was for staff wellbeing to be assessed face to face rather than through the use of apps.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **624 Review of Medpay**

### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding a review of the Medpay Scheme, following initial discussion on the report at the Joint Consultative Committee earlier in the evening.

The report stated that a scoping paper had been presented to the Committee in January 2019 which proposed an independent review of the Medpay Scheme. However, the Committee decided not to proceed at that time. Following a further discussion in June 2019 the Committee wanted to look again at whether the scheme should be independently reviewed in order that Members could satisfy themselves it was robust and delivering its objectives fairly.

Members raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

**Employee Engagement Survey** – it was noted from the results of the Employee Engagement survey that staff were asking for a review of Medpay, therefore, it was important that such a review should be undertaken.

**Recruitment** – whether there was a risk around recruitment, for example, the recruitment of social care staff. The Head of HR stated that whilst there was not a specific risk about the recruitment of social care staff, given that the Council could pay a market premium for such staff, there was a potential issue around the retention of social care staff, once in post.

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**Good practice** – the proposed review of Medpay would reflect best practice to ensure that policies were kept under review and would ensure that the policy would remain fit for purpose.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

- a) delegate to the Head of HR the authority to finalise the scope of the review and appoint an independent provider to carry out the review, following consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and the Opposition Spokesperson, and
- b) recommend to Cabinet that funding for the review be identified as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

## **625 Gender Pay Gap**

### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding the requirement to report annually on their Gender Pay Gap. The Head of HR advised the Committee that the mean and median gaps had increased since 2018 and that further work and analysis was being undertaken on this. She stated that it was proposed to submit a report to the Committee six months before the next publication of the gender pay gap and this would include a detailed plan of activity to help close the gap.

Members raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

**Comparator information** – in response to a question, the Head of HR informed the Committee that the Council would look into this once the gender pay gap information was published by other public sector bodies (by 30 March 2020). She also stated that the Council was part of a Kent HR network which would assist in this process.

**Analysis of age groups of staff leaving the Council** – in response to a question, the Head of HR confirmed that the Council would look into whether there were any particular issues relating to the age profile of certain professions and the impact this may have on the gender pay gap.

**Bonus pay** – in response to a question regarding whether there was an explanation for the narrowing of bonus pay between females and males in the context of this being a trend rather than representing a snapshot, the Head of HR would look into this as part of the analysis.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken on the report, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

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### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the content of this report and agree that, in future, the report is brought to the Committee 6 months prior to publication, with a detailed plan of activity to help close the gap for future reporting years.

### **626 Pay Policy Statement 2020/21**

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2020/2021 in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 for referral to Full Council for agreement.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken on the Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021 as set out in Appendix One to the report and refers it to Full Council for agreement.

### **627 Early Retirement and Severance Payments**

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report which set out all decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Wayne Hemingway, Principal Democratic Services Officer**

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