

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Thursday, 10 June 2010
7.00pm to 7.36pm

Record of the meeting

- Present:** Councillors: Carr (Chairman), Avey, Kenneth Bamber, Mackinlay, Maple and Shaw
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Smith (Substitute for Ruparel)
- In Attendance:** Paula Charker, Head of Human Resources, Head of Human Resources
Ralph Edwards, Head of HR Services (Schools), Head of HR Services (Schools)
Wayne Hemingway, Cabinet Coordinator, Cabinet Coordinator
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

63 Record of meetings

The records of the meeting held on 1 April 2010, and the Joint Meeting of All Committees held on 19 May 2010, were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

64 Apologies for absence

An apology was received from Councillor Ruparel.

65 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

66 Declarations of interest

Councillor Maple declared a personal interest in all items on the agenda because he is a Trade Union employee (GMB) and retained his right to speak and vote on the items.

67 Review of Payment of Essential Car User Allowance

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which set out a review of the payment of the essential car user allowance. It was noted

Employment Matters Committee, 10 June 2010

that 486 employees currently received this allowance and that, as part of the budget setting process, it had been determined that annual savings be found of £200,000 from this review. The report set out the basis of the review and its findings and the proposal that the current criteria for awarding essential car user status be changed. The proposed criteria would be a requirement for an employee to undertake at least 1000 business miles per annum and to undertake daily or near daily travel.

The Head of HR Services (Schools) reported orally on the discussion held at the Corporate Consultative Committee on 9 June 2010. He reported that whilst the Trades Unions were not in favour of the proposals, they accepted that the Council faced financial difficulties. He also reported that the Trades Unions had asked for a smooth transition to the new scheme and that officers adopt a pragmatic approach to its implementation.

Members discussed a number of issues including the recognition that some individuals may have chosen not to claim for expenses that they would have been entitled to; ensuring that postholders who carried out similar roles but may not all qualify under the new criteria would be treated fairly; the appeals process and the need for reassessment if a post substantially changed; the tax implications to individuals and the Council of the scheme.

A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) had been carried out on the proposals (appendix 3 to the report), and it was noted that a full impact assessment was not required.

Decision:

- (a) The Committee noted the consultation responses received so far and agreed to adopt a common sense approach to this matter based on fairness, equity and discretion.
- (b) The Committee agreed to replace the current criteria for awarding essential car user status to a set business mileage of 1000 miles per year and a requirement for an employee to use their car for daily or near daily travel and that such requirements should form part of the contractual terms of all new employees awarded essential user status.
- (c) The Committee asked officers to review the tax implications of the causal user mileage rate and consider the specified criteria for appeals.
- (d) The Committee noted that the Assistant Director, Organisational Services, will undertake any further formal consultation required and dismiss and re-engage individuals where appropriate.

68 Review of Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which set out a review of the Domestic Abuse Workplace policy. The Committee had agreed the policy in April 2009 where it was agreed that it would review the provisions one year later. The report set out the basis of the review including consultation with the Medway managers, Human Resources advisers, trade unions and equality forums. Care First, the Council's employee assistance provider, provided statistics relating to the use of the service with regard to domestic abuse.

Members discussed a number of issues including the statistical analysis as set out in paragraph 3 of the report and whether there was any comparative data available. Members also expressed their support for the continuation of the scheme.

The Head of HR Services reported that Care First, the Council's Employee Assistance provider, did not currently hold any comparative data on the use of the service for instances of domestic abuse/violence.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and asked officers to submit a review of this policy to this Committee in two years' time.

69 Early Retirements and Severance Payments

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which set out information on early retirements and severance decisions between 1 March 2010 – 31 May 2010.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

Chairman

Date:

Wayne Hemingway, Cabinet Co-ordinator

Telephone: 01634 332509

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

Employment Matters Committee, 10 June 2010