

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Employment Matters Committee**  
**Wednesday, 30 November 2022**  
**7.00pm to 7.25pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Fearn (Chairman), Prenter, Thorne and Van Dyke

**In Attendance:** Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer  
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services  
Nicola Trainor, Deputy Head of HR (Operations)

**422 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr and Mahil.

**423 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 31 August 2022 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were none.

**425 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 Prenter disclosed that he was a member of the ASLEF Trade Union.

Councillor Van Dyke disclosed that she was a member of the Unite Trade Union and received a pension from Unison.

## 426 Pay Negotiations 2023/2024

### Discussion:

Members considered a report on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2023/2024.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer highlighted details of the trade unions' joint pay claim as set out in section 4 of the report together with the Council's analysis of the claim as set out in sections 5 and 6 of the report. She explained that with regards to the sleep-in payments claim (£50), that the Council had recently increased this to £45, noting that the NJC rate was £39.24. She explained that the total cost of meeting the overall pay claim and statutory increases was £9m.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer noted that the 5% pay award proposal should be viewed in the context of the current budget gap for 2023/2024 (currently circa £29m) as well as further budget announcements that were due in December. She also advised the Committee that a number of cost modelling exercises were being undertaken, in particular with regards to lower paid staff.

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

**Risk management** – in response to questions about staff retention and other method of rewards (non-pay), The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that she would include information on retention figures in the January 2023 report. Whilst rates would differ around the Council, she referred to the turnover rate for HR (57%) which could be explained by the recent reorganisation. Those areas experiencing higher turnover rates were being included in the first tranche of the review of MedPay. She also referred to the results of the recent employee survey which indicated that 28% of staff aimed to stay at the Council beyond the next three years but there were concerns around staff turnover.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer highlighted a number of non-pay rewards including salary sacrifice schemes, interest free bicycle loans, interest free travel loans and voucher schemes and she undertook to include information on these in the next report (January).

**Lower paid staff** – in response to a question regarding how the 5% increase would be applied and whether lower paid staff would be awarded more of an increase in pay than those on higher bands of pay, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that whilst a flat rate increase had been awarded in the past, the Council was looking at higher increases for the lower grades of pay including the possibility of creating larger gaps between, for example, grades 2 and 3 which would help reward those on the higher grade.

**Sleep-in payments** – with reference to the discussion at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting held before this meeting, it was asked whether the trade union claim for sleep-in payments to be raised to £50 could be costed and

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whether a cost analysis of the use of agency staff compared to Council staff for this purpose could be provided, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that this work could be included in the January report. She advised the Committee that the current rate was above the NJC rate and the Council wanted to work with other Councils to avoid unnecessary competition in this area.

**Recruitment/vacancy rates** – with reference to the discussion at the JCC meeting regarding the issue of recruitment and vacancy rates, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that where it was difficult to recruit, then Locums were used. She referred to the national shortage of children’s social workers and the use of specific project teams to address particular challenges, which attracted higher rates of pay. She undertook to provide vacancy rates and the use of locums in the January report, noting that not all vacancies were actively being recruited to at the present time owing to the Council’s budget position.

**Extra day’s annual leave** – with reference to the discussion at the JCC meeting regarding the provision of an extra day’s annual leave, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer undertook to provide the cost of this in the January report. She also highlighted an issue from the employee survey around the buying and selling of annual leave, however, it was important that staff took their annual leave from a wellbeing perspective.

**Equal pay claims** – in response to a question relating to the risk of equal pay claims, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer referred to the MedPay review which she considered would reduce the risk of equal pay claims. She referred to external benchmarking as a key part of the review.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report, including progress made to date under the Pay Negotiations Protocol and agreed that the following be included in the pay negotiations report (January 2023):

- Job retention figures;
- Cost of sleep-in payments if increased to £50;
- Cost of agency staff covering sleep-ins;
- In-depth detail of benefits available to staff;
- Details of current vacancies including how more challenging vacancies are being addressed;
- Cost of an extra day’s annual leave.

## **427 Organisational Change**

### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report which detailed new reorganisations of services and transfers under the TUPE regulations for the period 1 April 2022 to 30

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September 2022 and updated the Committee on on-going reviews that had previously been reported at Employment Matters Committee but not concluded.

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes highlighted the summary of new reorganisations as set out in section 4 of the report.

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

**Bikeability service** – in response to a question regarding the current position, the Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised the Committee that whilst the contract had been awarded there was currently no suitable pension that the provider could offer, therefore, the Council was working with the provider to gain entry into the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), i.e. to keep them in a defined benefits pension scheme.

**Education and SEND** – in response to the proposals set out in paragraphs 4.3.2 and 4.3.4, the Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised the Committee that this was being funded through a grant funding scheme.

**Risk management** – it was referenced that the loss of three school-based staff should have been rated as C3 (significant/marginal) rather than D3 (low/marginal).

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the present position and the support arrangements for staff.

## **428 Speak Up, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies: Report on Instances September 2021 - August 2022**

### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report which informed Members about the number and nature of concerns raised, between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022, under the Council's Speak Up, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer highlighted details of the annual report, in particular that two concerns had been raised under the speak up policy during this period and that the report had also been considered by the Audit Committee on 5 October 2022.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**429 Early Retirement and Redundancy 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 2022 to 30 September 2022.

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes highlighted that three school based staff were made redundant and took early retirement at a total cost of £39,756.83, during this period.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services**

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