

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee**  
**Tuesday, 24 January 2023**  
**6.00pm to 6.55pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

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

**In Attendance:** Philip Bunn, ASCL  
Tania Earnshaw, UNISON  
Mark Hammond, UNISON  
Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer  
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services  
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes

**1 Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rupert Turpin.

**2 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 30 November 2022 was agreed as a correct record.

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

There were none.

**4 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 trade union.

## Joint Consultative Committee, 24 January 2023

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.

### 5 Pay Negotiations 2023/24

#### Discussion:

The Committee considered a report which set out progress on the pay negotiations for the financial year 2023/2024. A chart setting out the proposed pay scales for 2023/2024 (Appendix 5) was tabled at the meeting.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised Members of the process thus far, detailing the joint trade unions' pay claim for 2023/2024, an analysis of the pay claim and the Council's pay offer, as set out in the report. She stated that there had been no pay award in 2021 (due to the pandemic) and in 2022, the pay award consisted of a 1.6% general cost of living increase, and a 0.4% MedPay increase. For 2023/2024, an initial assumption in the draft budget of 5% had been made. She referred to the Council's pay proposal offer which consisted of a £1,000 (pro-rata) base increase for all staff with a £500 gap between range 2 – range 4, in recognition of the discussions held between the Council and the trade unions with particular regards to staff on the lower pay ranges and the real living wage. She advised the Committee that the Council's pay offer was made in the context of the Council's current financial pressures and that some of the draft budget had been used to address immediate uses in children's social care.

Tania Earnshaw (Unison) commented that the negotiations between the trade unions and the Council had been more positive this year resulting in more being on offer than before including an emphasis on lower paid staff. However, the trade unions had asked for a pay increase of £2,000 and she wanted to know why other councils could afford more pay for staff than Medway Council. As such, the pay offer was not good enough. She referred to the impact of MedPay on salaries which meant that staff had been downgraded as they could not move up the pay range. She explained that lower paid staff could earn more working in supermarkets.

She also referred to the results of the staff survey including the response rate (58%), and the number of employees who wished to leave the Council in 12 months' time (29%) and those who wished to leave as soon as possible (4%). In addition, she referred to the usage levels of the Unison hardship fund by staff.

She advised the Committee that the Council had to make choices as to what it prioritised spend on and that more investment in staff was needed. Whilst this year's negotiations had been better, more money needed to be found for the pay award.

## Joint Consultative Committee, 24 January 2023

Mark Hammond (Unison) also referred to the pay negotiations acknowledging they had been better this year, with particular reference to weighting the pay offer in favour of lower paid staff.

He referred to the impact of the five year pay freeze had on staff and referred to the pay offer which was lower than the current CPI rate (currently 13%) which meant even for those lower paid staff who would receive an 8% pay increase, it was still a reduction in overall terms when compared to inflation.

He also referred to the pay award from Folkestone and Hythe Council (£1,500) and Dover Council (6%) and he expected the Kent County Council pay rise to be higher than Medway's. He considered that the Council would continue to face recruitment and retention issues, particularly with social workers.

Philip Bunn (ASCL) advised the Committee that he acknowledged there was some proper negotiations taking place between the trade unions and the Council and, that what was being offered was better than previous years but was not enough to cover the pay erosion. He asked that other benefits be looked at such as annual leave if it was not possible to look at pay to address the issues in the staff survey.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer referred to the challenges in respect of children's social workers. She referred to the review of MedPay which was currently looking at the first 10% tranche of the organisation (e.g. Legal Services).

She referred to the recent staff survey and where there were perceived issues around issues such as career progression, pay and annual leave, it was helpful that the survey provided the evidence to back this up.

With reference to annual leave, this would include the buying and selling of annual leave as well as staff receiving additional leave.

She considered that the MedPay Review would fix the issues around pay, through career progression, as opposed to simply lifting pay. She also referred to the likely levels of the use of hardship funds reflected in the staff survey and that the Council was looking at what it could do in providing assistance. In conclusion, the pay offer had to be looked at in the context of the Council's serious financial problems.

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

MedPay Review – in response to a question of how the review would work if there was insufficient funding for it, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee she would be submitting an update report to the Committee on this and she advised that the first 10% being looked at was where pay was not matching the Council's comparators. She provided examples relating to locum staff in Legal Services and the HR service to schools which were currently being reviewed.

## **Joint Consultative Committee, 24 January 2023**

Budget pressures – in response to a question regarding the reduction in the budget for the pay award as a consequence of addressing children’s social workers issues, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that £700,000 had been required to address specific pay issues. However, the star chamber (budget setting) process had not concluded yet in terms of addressing the budget pressures.

Sleep in payments and annual leave – in response to questions regarding why the Council was not meeting the trade union’s request to increase this payment from £45 to £50 and how the cost of an extra day’s annual leave had been reached, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised the Committee that the Council looked to work together with other councils in setting the payments for things like sleep in payments. Medway had recently increased the sleep-in payment and was now in line with other councils including the Joint National Committee. With reference to annual leave cost, this had been reached by calculating the salary costs.

### **6 Gender Pay Gap**

#### **Discussion:**

The Committee considered a report which provided the Council’s results for the current reporting year in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 which required all employers with more than 250 employees to report annually on their gender pay gap.

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes highlighted the key aspects of the report noting that Public Health had offered to help undertake a deep dive on the 2022/23 HR data in relation to protected characteristics and pay which would help inform the Council’s new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services**

Telephone: 01634 332509

Email: [democratic.services@medway.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@medway.gov.uk)