

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Tuesday, 6 June 2023
7.00pm to 8.14pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Hamilton (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Animashaun, Fearn, Field, Filmer and Hackwell

In Attendance: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Nicola Smith, HR Project Manager
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes
Michael Turner, Principal Democratic Services Officer

16 Apologies for absence

There were none.

17 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 24 January 2023 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

19 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 Hackwell disclosed that his spouse worked on a part time basis for the Adult Education service in Medway.

Employment Matters Committee, 6 June 2023

Councillor Cook disclosed that she was a member of the NAHT trade union.

Councillor Field disclosed that he was a member, trade union representative and branch chair for Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) in Transport for London.

Councillor Hamilton disclosed that she was a member of Unite the Union.

20 MedPay Review Update

Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding the progress of the MedPay Review.

The point was made that at present senior managers could find it difficult to move to a different position elsewhere in the Council as they did not have the specialist knowledge required, Members were advised that the review would probably look at developing leadership competency frameworks and more generic skills, which would help with this issue.

A Member noted that, based on initial costs so far for those in the pilot phase, if multiplied would mean final costs could amount to £3m, and questioned how this could be affordable without leaving vacancies unfilled or making staff redundant. In response the Committee was informed that for some teams there would be no additional cost as there would be no need to introduce market premia. In addition, the teams in the pilot phase represented the highest costs due to backfilling with locums. It had been clear from the outset there would be costs associated with the review. An assumption had been made that an ideal workforce would be 20% entry level, 60% in the middle and 20% at succession level. To get to that position there would be an initial spike in costs before it settled down. Assumptions had been made around the mid points of salaries, which would create a £2m pressure. The latter included the costs of introducing a Range 8 in the pay scales. In addition, automation would lead to staff being paid more but fewer staff would be needed. However, there would not be any job losses due to the number of vacancies.

While there had been a lot of engagement with staff, the review would not lead to pay rises for everyone and there was a risk some staff may leave initially where they had expected a pay rise.

In terms of the example given of the career progression framework in the South Thames gateway Building Partnership, a Member commented it was not clear how a trainee would progress to level C. Also, the qualifications needed to progress to level C were not sufficient to apply for a promotion. Members were advised that the career progression framework included the ability to map how individuals moved to the next level. The framework would be adapted if needed.

Employment Matters Committee, 6 June 2023

In response to a query about how the success of the review and staff satisfaction were measured, there were 15 KPIs, including exit and staff surveys. More details about this would be shared with Members.

With regard to how the policy would apply to casual staff, who represented 17% of the workforce, Members were advised they received the cost-of-living element of the pay award. The draft policy did not apply to casual staff, given the nature of casual contracts, but this may change.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

21 Revised MedPay Policy

Discussion:

Members considered a revised draft working MedPay policy to support the implementation of phase 1 pilot group of the MedPay review. It was anticipated that there would be further iterations of this policy following learning from the pilot group before a final policy was brought to the Committee.

In removing the Level 1A reward for wider contribution to the Council, it was queried whether this would lead to staff just focusing on their core job, reduce motivation and lead to more silo working. Members were advised the number of staff who were awarded Level 1A each year was very small, so the risk of this was negligible. A suggestion was made that officers look at how to allow staff to make a wider contribution under the new policy.

Members were advised that Phase 3 would look at how transferrable skills could be utilised, for example, so that those in entry level roles could move to roles across the organisation.

In response to a query about access to training and mentoring and also developing soft skills, the Committee was advised that the main training route was through apprenticeships. There was a small corporate training budget. In the new model there was an expectation that more senior staff would mentor new starters. There was a Leadership Academy which would be mandatory for all leaders, which would improve consistency. The Council was also looking at the possibility of secondments across the public sector in Medway. There was an in-house trainer for soft skills and managers could ask for new training courses to be commissioned. There was a comprehensive training library, and the new career framework would recommend training needed for an individual's development.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note this draft working policy.

22 Skills Shortage and Retention Allowance Policy

Discussion:

Members considered a report on a new policy to replace existing policy and practice relating to the awarding of market premia allowances. This may be revised as a result of the MedPay Review pilot group and roll out of the review in Phase 2; however, consistency of practice was urgently required, and it was proposed that the practice set out within the policy be introduced with immediate effect whilst consultation was underway with trade unions and staff.

Reference was made to the special conditions that applied to the retention policy, in particular that a resignation not be submitted prior to a payment being made. What would happen if someone resigned but the employer wanted to retain them was queried. Members were advised this had been included out of caution. The intention was that the policy be used proactively and before someone resigned. In response to a point that this reduced flexibility, an undertaking was given to test this when the policy was applied to see if it was having a negative impact.

In terms of how the policy would be communicated, there would be briefing sessions for staff, and continued dialogue with Medway Makers, HR business partners would share the policy with directorate management teams and there was a new communications channel for service managers. In addition, the HR team were looking at a system to ensure managers had read and understood new policies.

In response to a question about how to ensure managers' mindsets were changed, the Committee was advised that managers in the pilot phase had been encouraged to be honest with their views and experiences and about what tips and hints they would share with others.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) approved the new Skills Shortage and Retention Allowance Policy, as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- b) agreed to receive an update on first findings after the policy is introduced and to receive an update on how well the new MedPay policies were working during Phase 2 of the MedPay review.

23 Changes to the MedPay Salary Scales

Discussion:

Members considered a report which recommended improvements to the MedPay salary pay range to ensure the Council attracted, recruited and retained an effective workforce.

Employment Matters Committee, 6 June 2023

A Member expressed surprise at the fact that of the 20 posts that would now fall into a Range 8 band, 17 of these posts were currently vacant or obsolete. Members were advised that these were job profiles created at the start of MedPay in 2014 which had not been made obsolete when jobs had changed.

In response to a concern about the £2m cost of the changes, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised this was based on an assumption everyone would be at the midpoint of the pay range.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to recommend to Council the introduction of a Range 8 pay band and also the introduction of spot points and a £500 pay gap at the bottom of the pay ranges (as set out in Section 3 and 4 of the report) and increase the bottom of the service manager range to £55,455.

24 Organisational Change

Discussion:

Members considered a report on new reorganisations of services and transfers under the TUPE regulations for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 and updates on on-going reviews that had previously been reported at Employment Matters Committee, but not concluded.

Decision:

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

Chairman

Date:

Michael Turner, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332503

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk