

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 6 December 2023
7.00pm to 7.29pm

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), Fearn, Field and Filmer
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Spring (Substitute for Hackwell)
Howcroft-Scott (Substitute for Animashaun)
- In Attendance:** Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Katey Durkin, Chief Finance Officer
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes
Michael Turner, Principal Democratic Services Officer

421 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Animashaun and Hackwell.

422 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 September 2023 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

The record of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 6 September 2023 was noted.

423 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

424 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

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Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Cook disclosed that she was a member of the NAHT trade union. In relation to agenda item 9 (Organisational Change) she added that through her employment she provided services to Luton primary school and the Rivermead Inclusive Trust mentioned in the paper but had not been involved in the decision referred to.

Councillor Field disclosed that he was a member, trade union representative and branch chair for the TSSA in Transport for London.

Councillor Hamilton disclosed that she was a member of Unite the Union and the NEU trade union.

Councillor Howcroft-Scott disclosed that she was a member of the Unite trade union and was also an Accessibility Consultant for Southeastern Railway, an independent custody visitor, a member of the National Union of Professional Foster Carers, an Equalities Officer at Greenwich LEA and a Disabled Workers Officer for the TUC.

425 Membership and Terms of Reference of the Joint Consultative Committee

At the last meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) it had been recommended that the Committee's terms of reference be amended to reflect that two Unison representatives usually attended JCC meetings.

Members accordingly agreed a change to the JCC's terms of reference, as outlined in paragraph 2.1 (b) of the paper attached.

426 Pay Negotiations 2024/25

Discussion:

Members considered a report on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2024/2025.

The pay claim from Unison was as follows:

- A return to NJC by the third year of this administration.
- A 10% flat rate, consolidated increase for all staff
- The introduction of a 35-hour working week with no loss of pay.
- An uplift to the sleep-in payments of 3.88 %

In response to a query about what the impact of the pay negotiations on staff and retention might be, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer commented on the importance of the correction of historical pay drift by means of the MedPay

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review, a reasonable cost of living pay increase, non-monetary incentives and a review of HR policies. The MedPay review included a new career progression framework and it was not the case that everyone's pay would be increased

Noting that the Financial Outlook 2024/25 included an estimate of a c£10 million pay allocation for staff for the pay award and the impact of the MedPay review, where this £10m came from was queried. The Chief Finance Officer advised that the draft budget for 2024/25 included projections of likely amounts raised by Council Tax etc laid against projections of the costs to run services. There was currently a budget gap of around £35m, which was not yet funded. In response to a comment that this gap was likely to be funded by council taxpayers, the Chief Finance Officer advised Council Tax could only be increased by up to 5% so the extent to which local taxpayers would fund this gap was limited.

Members noted that at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting earlier, comments had been made on the need to recognise the challenges faced by the Council due to austerity; that Unison had seen a noticeable difference in attitudes towards the negotiation this year and that non-monetary benefits had been discussed.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report, including progress made to date under the Pay Negotiations Protocol.

427 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Discussion:

Members considered a report on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which was a new strategy to be positioned above the existing Fair Access and Inclusion policy.

Decision:

The Committee approved the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report.

428 Speak Up, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies: Report on Instances September 2022 - September 2023

Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding the number and nature of concerns raised, between September 2022 and September 2023, under the Council's Speak Up, Anti- Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies.

With regard to who the officers were who investigated concerns raised under the Speak Up policy and how fairness was ensured, the Chief Organisational

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Officer advised that this responsibility now sat with the Internal Audit and Fraud team. There were also internal investigators who would carry out an internal review. Their findings were considered by a response group comprising herself, the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Legal Officer. The latter group reviewed the findings of the investigation and monitored for trends. Concerns could be raised with a line manager, other senior managers or the Response Group.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

429 Organisational Change

Discussion:

Members considered a report which detailed new reorganisations of services and transfers under the TUPE regulations for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 and which also included updates on on-going reviews that had previously been reported at Employment Matters Committee but not concluded.

In response to a comment about the importance of reassuring staff who were subject to re-organisations, given the anxiety the latter could cause, Members were advised that updated guidance for managers had been issued and the aim was to try to undertake reorganisations with minimal effect on staff wherever possible, reassure staff about job security and to not put large numbers of people at risk of redundancy.

Decision:

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

430 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 2023 to 30 September 2023.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

Chairperson

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