

Medway Council
Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee
Wednesday, 6 December 2023
6.00pm to 6.47pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Hamilton (Chairperson), Cook, Fearn, Field and Filmer

Substitutes: Councillors:
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

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Animashaun and Hackwell and also Mark Hammond, Emily Calder-Evans, Marie Sweetlove and Philip Bunn.

2 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 September 2023 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)

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There were none.

Other interests

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 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.

5 Pay Negotiations 2024/25

The Committee 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 %

Tania Earnshaw (Unison) outlined the reasons behind the pay claim, including:

- The Union recognised the Council was in a difficult financial position, which was why they were calling for a return to NJC by the third year of this administration.
- Unlike in previous years, the Council's starting point for 2024/25 was not a 1% pay increase and this was welcomed. The change in attitude towards pay negotiations year had been significant.
- The NJC would mean pay was future proofed and not dependant on the party in charge of the Council.
- Unison felt more reassured now about the MedPay review.
- If the Council had stayed in the NJC, pay for staff would be significantly higher now.
- Staff were leaving to work in other Councils for more pay.
- Many staff were struggling to make ends meet, were taking out loans or using food banks.
- The staff survey showed employees wanted more annual leave.
- Sleep in allowances had been frozen when MedPay was introduced, which affected already low paid staff.

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A Member made the point that staff had always been valued. Austerity meant that producing a balanced budget in the past had been difficult, but the previous administration had always tried to agree a pay award as best they could.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer acknowledged that the MedPay review had been launched as there had been limitations with the current pay structure. However, assumptions about drifts in pay from the NJC arrangements were not always accurate. The staff survey showed how people felt they were treated and valued and engagement with staff was better.

Councils were being recommended by the Government to not decrease the working week, but the Council was prepared to look at annual leave. Where there had been grievances about pay, benchmarking had showed there was not an issue. The ability to work from home gave more flexibility and had increased the market in which the Council recruited. With regard to future proofing pay, this was not a feature in MedPay, but pay would be future proofed in the review.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that the medium-term financial strategy reflected the addition of £10million representing an estimate of the cost of a pay award and the impact of the MedPay review in 2024/25. In addition, an attempt was being made to focus more on the longer term when budgeting, including pay.

Tania Earnshaw added that union members would like more annual leave, parking, leisure centre discounts, access to cooperative health care and an increased mileage rate which was paid more frequently. She agreed that pay was not the only issue.

It was agreed that the Employment Matters Committee be asked to note that the JCC had heard comments 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 pay negotiations this year and that non-monetary benefits had been discussed.

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Chairperson

Date:

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