

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 4 December 2024
7.01pm to 7.50pm

Record of the meeting

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

- Present:** Councillors: Mark Prenter (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Fearn and Field
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Jones (Substitute for Hamilton)
Willey (Substitute for Hackwell)
- In Attendance:** Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes

476 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hackwell and Hamilton.

477 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 4 September 2024 was agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

The record of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 4 September 2024, was noted by the Committee.

478 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

479 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

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Other interests

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

Councillor Field disclosed that he was a member of the TSSA trade union in Transport for London and a member of Unison.

Councillor Mark Prenter disclosed that he was a member of the ASLEF trade union.

480 Speak Up, Anti-Bribery, Anti-Money Laundering and Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) Policies: Report on Instances September 2023 – September 2024

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which set out the number and nature of concerns raised, between September 2023 and September 2024, under the Council's Speak up (whistleblowing), Anti-Bribery, Anti-Money Laundering and Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers policies.

In response to a query raised in relation to there being zero returns on the Speak Up policy, Members were assured that due to triaging several issues were dealt with more appropriately as other matters, such as grievances. Consistent effort was placed on raising staff awareness of the policy, the effectiveness of which was monitored through the staff survey. It was not always possible to move forward with anonymous forms received if they did not provide enough information. To the Chief Organisational Culture Officer's knowledge, staff members who had raised concerns had not left as a direct consequence.

Looking at the comparison table of the number of concerns raised under the Speak Up policy for the last three years, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that the policy was only three years old and as it had commenced during COVID there was no real comparator baseline at the moment. It was possible that there were fewer concerns raised initially due less awareness.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the comments of the Audit Committee as set out at section 8 of the report.
- b) The Committee noted the report.

481 Pay Negotiations 2025/2026

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer presented the report on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2025/2026.

The joint Trade Union pay claim for 2025/2026 was as follows:

- a return to National Joint Council (NJC) by the third year of this administration;
- a 5% flat rate, consolidated increase for all staff;
- an uplift to the sleep-in payments of 5%.

The pay claim related to MedPay pay arrangements only, and it was noted that MedPay was not based on a pay point system but on staff being paid in accordance with their respective pay range. It was noted that the estimate of the claim was based on staff currently employed rather than the whole staffing budget of the council and did not take account of vacant posts in the current structures. The 2025/26 draft budget included an estimate in respect of the pay award for staff and the impact of the MedPay review, as well as an earmarked sum for a required increase in employers pension contributions.

In response to a query about mental health first aiders, it was confirmed that they did not receive any additional payments like first aiders and fire evacuation staff. She would, however, check that all professional training was up to date.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting.

Decision:

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

482 Updated MedPay PPP Policy

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes introduced the report which presented the final draft of the updated MedPay Performance, Progression and Pay (PPP) policy for agreement.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting. In response to a query which reflected on comments made at that meeting in relation to staff being able to raise queries and concerns, the Committee were advised that from the beginning staff had been able to raise any issues directly with MedPay champions within the project team, as well as a regular newsletter with contacts, the opportunity to raise with line managers and Trade Unions, as well as Medway live events.

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It was queried whether there was a RAG spreadsheet available to see the current position, overall cost and overall profile and how this had landed, as well as comparative data on how staff had been affected i.e. whether pay had increased or remained the same etc. The Committee was advised that it was not possible to produce comparative data yet. There had been an initial evaluation of the pilot and there were going to be 3 phases following this with an evaluation at each stage, however, they had now all merged together so there would be an evaluation once all teams had implemented, with ongoing reviews of impact moving forwards. It was reiterated that the purpose had not been to increase salaries but to address historical perceived inequalities and enable staff to have a mechanism to progress within the salary range.

Considering the number of forms to complete, it was also queried whether there were any plans to digitalise the process. It was acknowledged that the process was a bit cumbersome, but this was something that could be investigated when there was capacity depending on resources.

Decision:

The Committee agreed the policy attached as Appendix A to the report, for all staff subject to MedPay PPP, with immediate effect.

483 Reward and Recognition Strategy 2024-2028

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which presented for information, the draft Total Reward and Recognition Strategy 2024-28, attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Strategy formed part of the wider attraction strategy seeking to build a reputation as an 'employer of choice' - a strong employer brand that was much sought after as it brought with it a number of key organisational benefits, but primarily meant a better chance of attracting the best talent and retaining them for longer.

The clear connections between what had been requested in the staff survey and what was being delivered was applauded. Regarding career pathways and progression, the Audit team had been requested to provide an independent review of the process, and HR would conduct some sampling. With reference to reviewing and measuring the Strategy, benchmarking was already undertaken but could be widened more nationally, currently it was mainly within Kent. There were a number of new things that required building into the current structure, and moving forward check pieces would be undertaken to ensure there was no drift from the plan in place.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting, particularly the concern about possible restrictions on training opportunities.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and Appendix 1 to the report.

484 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes introduced the report which sought adoption of the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy attached at Appendix B to the report.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting particularly the request for clarity on how outcomes would be measured. The Committee were advised that the refreshed Equality Board which now includes TU representation would monitor performance against the actions plan.

The Committee were assured that the updated policy did include those with care experience as a protected characteristic.

Decision:

The Committee agreed the adoption of the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy attached at Appendix B to the report.

485 Youth and Community Workers - Pay and Conditions

Discussion:

The Committee considered the options in respect of the Youth Service aligning to MedPay Performance, Progression and Pay (PPP) or Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Youth and Community Worker pay and conditions.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting, where Option 3 was highlighted as the preferred way forward.

Decision:

The Committee considered the options in respect of pay and conditions for Youth Workers and agreed Option 3 as the preferred option ready for the 29 January 2025 report to this Committee prior to consideration at Full Council as part of the pay offer.

Chairperson

Date:

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