

Medway Council
Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee
Wednesday, 4 December 2024
6.00pm to 6.57pm

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

Employee Side Representatives: Tania Earnshaw UNISON (Vice Chairperson) and Philip Bunn ASCL

Substitutes: Councillors:
Jones (substitute for Hamilton)
Willey (substitute for Hackwell)

Employee Side Representatives:
Lauraine McManus (substitute for NEU)

In Attendance: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hackwell and Hamilton, and Trade Union representatives Emily Calder-Evans and Mark Hammond.

2 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.

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 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.

5 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.

There was concern that surveillance had been undertaken on a member of staff without their knowledge and the costs involved for such surveillance were queried considering budgets were tight. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that this did not fall under her remit and was unable to provide further comment on this matter but would seek further information.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

6 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%.

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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.

The UNISON representative took the opportunity to outline the historical reasoning behind the claim for an uplift to sleep-in payments, advising that previously these payments had in effect been frozen and that it could help prevent migration to the private sector. It was suggested that some staff were not receiving the current sleep-in payment stated in the report, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer undertook to investigate this further as the increase should have been applied on 1 April 2024. It was noted that the current sleep-in payments were above NJC rates and competitive which had been discussed at the meeting on 4 November. Attention was now being focussed on other allowances.

In response to a query, it was advised that the ambition was to have the framework in place by April 2025 before looking at the NJC pay scales. The NJC pay scales for 2024/25 had only recently been announced so it was not practical to consult until the national position was clearer. A risk analysis would be reported to this Committee in January. A paper on costings was requested.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

7 Updated MedPay PPP Policy

Discussion:

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

The following issues were discussed:

Pay progression and cost of living: In response to a question, it was noted that there was no direct link to pay progression under the performance appraisal process, and that the cost-of-living award was separate to pay progression. It was also confirmed that those on maternity or sickness would not miss out as progression was not a one-off opportunity but part of an ongoing conversation.

Diversity Impact Assessment: A query was made in relation to the Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) which stated no adverse impact on protected characteristics when previously, the feedback on Phase 1 had identified possible concerns for employees 50+. The Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised that this had since been resolved and therefore did not feature in the DIA to this report. It was also clarified that salary honouring had a 5-year protection and those with the protection would receive the cost of living pay award whilst the Council completed implementation of the project and there

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would be opportunity to progress within the range. In most cases it appeared employees had found the changes positive as there had in fact been some pay increases. It was anticipated that it would be unlikely for anyone to be sitting at the salary honoured level for any real length of time. It was agreed that any individual cases could be discussed outside of the meeting.

Training: Some concern was expressed as to availability of training opportunities due to resource constraints, and employees therefore being unable to progress through no fault of their own. A case for additional training budget had been made for next year.

MedPay: In response to concerns raised on the fast tracking of Phase 2, it was suggested that MedPay may be getting confused with restructuring and role redesigns. It was not possible to provide any statistics on phase 2 as cohort 1 had not yet completed, however, since implementation no further issues had been raised with individual assessments. Where regrading had taken place, it had been upwards. A significant equality assurance process was being undertaken.

Communication: Some concern was expressed as to whether managers were providing correct information, and it was queried how the Council could ensure those not a member of a union could obtain information. In response it was advised that there were MedPay Champions, regular newsletters, there had been lunchtime drop-in sessions, plenty of information was available on the Council's intranet and HR staff were available for any queries.

NJC: The time and effort being placed on MedPay considering the possibility of moving to NJC in year 3 of the administration was queried. It was explained that this was about the development of staff and transferable skills that fed into the work strategy, as well as alignment of salaries. It would also assist with recruitment. It was suggested that any concerns were in the minority and could possibly arise from an expectation of a domino effect to other grades which was not the case.

Schools: In response to a comment that MedPay was not wanted in schools, it was advised that this was only for Medway Council employees and HR only acted in an advisory capacity for schools, if at all.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

8 Reward and Recognition Strategy 2024-2028

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which set out the draft Total Reward and Recognition Strategy 2024-28, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

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The UNISON representative stated that usually the top requests when consulting members were more annual leave, free car parking, and healthcare. However, this year more training opportunities had featured heavily.

It was confirmed that for wellbeing, free use of leisure centres was being looked at along with a whole range of other health benefits.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

9 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes presented the report which set out a revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. It was noted that the existing Fair Access and Inclusion policy was a statement rather than a policy. The new policy was written to align to the Workforce Strategy, and the One Medway Council Plan, supporting 'Our Values and behaviours' and 'Our Principles – Equality and Diversity in all we do'.

It was suggested that it would be useful to have breakdowns and share outcomes. It was advised that these would be monitored through the newly formed Equality Board, which now had trade union representation.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

10 Youth and Community Workers - Pay and Conditions

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced this report which set out the options for discussion, 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.

On discussion, Option 3, aligning to JNC Youth and Community Workers terms and conditions except for automatic increments, and introduction of a career progression framework for youth, was the preferred way forward. Ongoing option to access teacher pensions was requested.

Decision:

The Committee provided comments to the Employment Matters Committee as outlined above.

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Chairperson

Date:

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