

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 29 January 2025
7.00pm to 8.11pm

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, Field, Hackwell, Hamilton and Sands

In Attendance: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Jody Cox, Head of Payroll Pensions and Systems
Katey Durkin, Chief Finance Officer
Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Smith, HR Business Partner (Projects)
Nicola Trainor, Head of Council Planning and Programmes

657 Apologies for absence

There were none.

658 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 4 December 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 December 2024, was noted by the Committee.

659 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

660 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. For transparency, she also declared that she had a Medway Lesure Centre membership.

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

Councillor Hamilton disclosed that she was a member of the NEU.

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

661 Senior Management Leadership Competency Framework

Discussion:

The HR Project Manager presented the report which introduced a Senior Management Leadership Competency framework that may be used when assessing the performance of senior managers.

Leadership styles: In response to a query as to how the framework might adapt to the need to use different leadership styles depending on the nature of the work at hand, the HR Project Manager advised that the tool was flexible and allowed for adoption of different management styles within the Council's values and behaviours, and with suitable risk management. Some areas would be wedded to professional frameworks and work needed to be done on aligning with those. It would facilitate a conversation with line managers and allow flexibility for growth without being specific.

Strategic working group (SWG): In response to a query, it was advised that the variable attendance at the SWG had been enhanced by having a TEAMS channel and workshops where the documentation had been thoroughly tested and which had led to high quality discussion and feedback.

National management standards: It was noted that the framework was not specifically designed for the local government sector and therefore the reference within the report to 'where possible, align with national management standards and the Chartered Manager Institute (CMI)' was due to the need to adapt it to suit working within local government, for example, working with local politicians.

Benchmarking: The HR Project Manager responded to a query explaining that as well as access to external benchmarking, there was access to a wealth of HR resources by becoming a full member of South East Employers (SEE) which therefore provided excellent value for money for the fee.

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

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) supported the introduction of the Senior Management Leadership Competency Framework to be rolled out from 1 April 2025.
- b) noted that further work would be undertaken to ensure that the principles of Performance, Progression and Pay were applied to senior management roles including the principle of progressing through the pay range.
- c) noted that a review of senior manager roles should be undertaken which would include salary benchmarking against other local authorities and unitary authorities.
- d) recognised that salary scales for senior managers would require review to enable pay progression through the pay ranges and that any proposed changes would require Full Council decision. This review should aim to be undertaken within 6 months.

662 Gender Pay Gap

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes introduced the report which provided sight of the Council's results for this reporting year ahead of publication on the Council's public website by 31 March 2024 and on the Government dedicated Gender pay gap reporting website. It was noted that the Council does not have a specific duty to publish data on an ethnicity or disability pay gap, but this data is also provided in this report.

It was noted that an updated replacement Appendix 5 – Diversity Impact Assessment had been previously circulated earlier that day.

Median Gender Pay Gap in hourly rate of pay: Members sought clarification of the figures set out at paragraph 4.11 of the report. The Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised that the increase in the median Gender Pay Gap in hourly rate of pay had been caused by an increase of only 8 males within the reporting year. This was potentially due to them being recruited at the higher quartile, but she would check this and report back to the Committee.

Recruitment: It was queried how the lower number of females in higher management roles was being addressed and five-year trend data analysis of this was requested in order to be able to track whether there had been improvement at this level. The Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised that an action plan had not yet been developed. It was noted that males were more likely to negotiate salaries and the introduction of the MedPay Performance, Progression & Pay (PPP) Policy and three set points would go some way to eliminate this potential reason for disparity. At the moment there was not the available resources to further interrogate the data or build an action

Employment Matters Committee, 29 January 2025

plan, however the data of the last five years was available and could be presented within in the next report as requested.

It was noted that there was potentially a higher proportion of female colleagues due to the family friendly policies, but there was no definitive answer.

Bonus pay: With regards to why there were higher numbers of minority ethnic employees receiving bonus pay, the Head of Council Planning and Programmes advised that she could not answer that and would take that away and report back. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer suggested that it could be due to retention payments and higher ethnicity rates within the People Directorate, but this assumption would need to be tested.

Disability Gap: The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that a workshop in March would start looking at a campaign on building employees' trust to disclose any disabilities, as the declaration rate was not as high as it should be and therefore not a completely accurate picture. Progress would be shared at a future meeting.

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

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the contents of the report in relation to the Gender Pay Gap as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, prior to external publication.
- b) The Committee noted the ethnicity and disability pay gap results as set out in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report.
- c) The Committee requested comparative five-year data in future reports, to enable trend analysis of upper quartile female recruitment.

663 Pay Negotiations 2025/2026

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which updated on the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2025/2026, and to set out the Council's pay offer for 2025/26 for referral to Full Council for agreement.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer suggested an amendment to the recommendations to extend the leisure centre offer to Medway Council Councillors as well as employees and offer a 25% family and joint membership annual membership, with no monthly membership falling below £20 a month.

Cycle to Work Scheme: It was confirmed that this was a new offer as a salary sacrifice scheme not the previous interest free loan.

Employment Matters Committee, 29 January 2025

Pay offer: Some concern was raised as to the affordability of the pay offer in light of significant budget pressures; mindful of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) conclusion that Medway was in a grave situation in relation to its financial sustainability; and the concept of asking council taxpayers to fund staff rather than improve their lives.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that there were decisions to be made about what the Council wanted to deliver and to assist this a stable and engaged workforce was required. The last budget had included a need for 'right-sizing' to be able to deliver the Council Plan, ultimately the risk was not being able to deliver the plan the Full Council had agreed. A report would be considered by Cabinet on 11 February 2025 which would articulate the latest thinking on reducing the budget gap moving forward. Her role was to assist the Council in achieving a balance budget that delivered the Council's goals.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer added that there were high hidden costs to turnover and for 8 years pay had not risen with inflation or kept up with the market. The previous pay award had already seen a considerable reduction in turnover, but they were still playing catch up with the market.

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

Decision:

The Committee recommended to Full Council to agree:

- a) a 5% increase for all staff on MedPay terms and conditions, which includes those on MedPay Performance, Progression Pay Scheme as well as those who are on the legacy scheme.
- b) not to increase sleep-in payments.
- c) not to return to National Joint Council paycales currently, but keep negotiations open on this matter.
- d) an additional 'wellbeing' day to be awarded on a colleague's birthday to be taken on the day or close to the birthday as agreed with line management.
- e) to offer a salary sacrifice Cycle to Work scheme with a scheme partner for an initial term of two years.
- f) to implement a shared cost Additional Voluntary Contribution scheme with My Money Matters, formerly AVC Wise for an initial term of three years.
- g) to offer a 50% discount on annual single premier membership to our leisure centres annual admission membership and a 25% discount on family and joint memberships, with no monthly membership falling below

Employment Matters Committee, 29 January 2025

£20, for Medway Council employees and Medway Council Councillors to Medway Leisure Centres.

- h) to align the Children and Adults social care pay scales, for the reasons set out in Appendix 4 to the report.
- i) to align the Joint National Committee Youth and Community Workers terms and conditions except for automatic increments, as agreed at this Committee on 4 December 2024.

664 Pay Policy Statement

Discussion:

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which set out the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2025/2026 in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 for referral to Full Council for agreement.

Decision:

The Committee noted the Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and referred it to Full Council for agreement.

665 Organisational Change

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes introduced the report which detailed new reorganisations of services and transfers under the TUPE regulations for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 and updates on-going reviews that have previously been reported at Employment Matters Committee but not concluded.

Decision:

The Committee noted the present position and the support arrangements for staff.

666 Early Retirement and Redundancy Payments

Discussion:

The Head of Council Planning and Programmes introduced the report which set out the decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. The Committee noted the exempt appendix to the report.

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

Employment Matters Committee, 29 January 2025

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and exempt appendix to the report.

667 Revised Managing Sickness and Absence Policy

Following earlier discussions at the Joint Consultative Committee, the Chairperson advised that the report had been withdrawn to allow for consultation with trade unions and would be considered by the Committee at a later date.

Chairperson

Date:

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