

Medway Council
Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee
Thursday, 3 July 2025
6.00pm to 6.19pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Cook, Fearn, Hackwell BEM, Hamilton and Mark Prenter (Chairperson)

Substitutes: Councillors:
Shokar

In Attendance: Mark Hammond, UNISON
Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Selina Bullivant, Learning & Development Manager
Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer

1 Appointment of Chairperson

Councillor Mark Prenter was elected as Chairperson for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Tania Earnshaw (Unison) was elected as Vice-Chairperson for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Councillor Mark Prenter in the Chair

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peake and Sands, and Trade Union representatives Tania Earnshaw UNISON and Marie Sweetlove NAHT.

3 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 1 May 2025 was agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

4 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

5 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 Hamilton disclosed that she was a member of the NEU trade union.

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

Councillor Shokar disclosed that he was a member of the UNITE trade union.

6 Learning and Development Strategy 2025 - 2028

Discussion

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which presented the proposed Learning and Development Strategy for 2025-2028. The strategy was designed to complement the Workforce Strategy, Recruitment Strategy, the One Medway Council Plan and the Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan.

The UNISON representative welcomed the Strategy. In response to a query the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that requests for training did need to align with the council plan as the budget was limited and value for money needed to be demonstrated. A number of requests had already been received and the Learning & Development Manager was entering into conversations and testing the necessity of the training requests. Decisions would be made transparently with a focus on organisational priorities

In response to a question about the cost implications associated with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, the Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that there had been training provided to members of the Equality Board, and that further exploration was underway to determine what support may be required for members of the different council forums. She advised that the staff survey included several EDI-related questions, with a free-text response option. Training was also being considered to support staff in managing difficult conversations.

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The Chief Organisational Culture Officer confirmed that she was not aware of the union learning initiative and agreed to investigate this.

Decision:

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

7 MedPay Review Update

Discussion

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which updated the Committee on the progress of the MedPay Review, with a specific focus on the period between February 2024 and June 2025. She advised that some of the delay in completion had been caused by advice from Ofsted in children's services, where work had been paused whilst recommended changes had been worked through, as well as some further delays due to staff availability and sheer demand of work.

The UNISON representative queried whether there were any trends or issues already appearing that could be shared. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer confirmed that whilst no red flags had emerged, one emerging issue was the tension between experience and formal qualifications. Long-serving staff had questioned the need for formal qualifications when they had extensive practical experience. Also there were staff either nearing retirement or just not looking for promotion who were not interested in training. The HR team was currently exploring how to balance this without undermining the professionalism of the framework. It was requested that the Committee be made aware of any information about any trends arising.

The UNISON representative requested that unions be involved early on with any issues to see if working together could resolve any potential conflicts before escalation.

Decision:

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

Chairperson

Date:

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Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332115

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk