

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee**  
**Tuesday, 2 September 2025**  
**6.00pm to 6.55pm**

**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, Peake and Mark Prenter (Chairperson)

**Substitutes:** Mark Hammond

**In Attendance:** Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer  
Steve Dickens, Democratic Services Officer  
Nicola Trainor, Head of Employee Relations

**1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sands and Tania Earnshaw.

**2 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting was amended to include apologies from Phillip Bunn representative of ASCL trade union. The amendment having been made, the record of 3 July was agreed 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 (DPI)

There were none.

Other significant Interests (OSI)

There were none.

Other Interests

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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 Peake disclosed that he was a member Unison.

### **5 Staff Survey 2025 results**

#### **Discussion:**

The Chief Organisational Officer introduced the report and provided a presentation outlining the results of the recent staff survey. She highlighted that the survey had only recently been completed, and further work was required to review the data, draw conclusions and create an action plan.

The response rate of 55.5% was slightly lower than the survey held last year, there was some anecdotal evidence that staff would like the opportunity to have different ways to make their views known beyond an annual survey including group conversations. The main staff survey would be held in future every two years and more short surveys would be undertaken to improve engagement with staff and understand the views of staff on particular issues.

The principal results showed positive improvement in communication between management and staff. This included staff reported being kept up to date about progress made by the Council and good staff knowledge of employee values and behaviours.

Staff felt valued and were happier with the pay and reward package offered by the Council and this was also reflected in results which showed improved responses in staff feeling empowered, supported in career progression and more staff recommending the Council as a good place to work.

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer stated that results regarding bullying, discrimination and harassment were similar to the last survey and this was disappointing. She was concerned that 6% of staff felt unable to be themselves at work and 21% did not know who to report bullying and discrimination concerns to.

In addition, she highlighted concern that 6.2% experienced bullying, in the last year, however less than half of those reported this and of those that did report, only half were satisfied with the outcome. Further work would be undertaken in this area, a number of free text responses were provided, these responses would be reviewed to ensure they were anonymised and the response then considered to take future action to support staff.

The following issues were discussed

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Trade Unions representatives expressed concern regarding the results related to bullying, discrimination and harassment. The Unison representative commented that the survey response rate of 55.5% may mean that the total number of incidents may be under reported.

Trade Unions representatives offered to work with Council offices to promote responses to the concerns raised and improve results.

**Bullying** – The Committee discussed the results of the survey related to bullying, Chief Organisational Culture was asked if this may be related to a management training issue, she stated that new managers had been provided a training package which included issues related to bullying and harassment. The package was effective but would be reviewed and enhancements made.

In response to a question whether there was any feedback from staff who had raised complaints that HR was the voice of management. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer stated that there had been a small number of cases where staff had reported this. This was clearly disappointing and HR remained committed to providing support to staff.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Joint Consultative Committee submitted comments to the Employment Matters Committee. Trade Unions expressed concerns regarding bullying, discrimination and harassment, particularly in relation to those reporting satisfaction with the outcome of bullying investigations. Further comparative information regarding previous survey results was requested and further investigation was requested into the results and the numbers of staff who did not know who to speak to report concerns.

## **6 Gender Pay Gap 2025/26**

### **Discussion:**

Head of Employee Relations introduced the report which was due for consideration by the Employment Matters Committee prior to publication by the Council. She noted one amendment to the figures, at March 2025 the mean gender pay group was 6.4% and median pay gap was 8.1%. The gender pay gap continued to fall and remained below the national gender pay gap. In addition, Medway ranked 7th of 14 local authorities in Kent.

The Council also published information on the ethnicity and disability pay gap. There was a small negative ethnicity and disability pay gap in 2025, however, there is no requirement for employees to declare their ethnicity or disability, so the Council cannot be certain that all relevant salaries are included. The current declaration rate of 58.5% related to their disability status means the disability pay gap is a less reliable figure and increasing declaration of disability remained part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

The following issues were discussed:

Trade Union representatives raised no issues.

**Decision:**

- a) The Joint Consultative Committee submitted comments to the Employment Matters Committee.

**7 Probationary Policy**

**Discussion:**

The Head of Employee Relations introduced the report. She highlighted that feedback received regarding the proposed policy suggested that paragraph 2.2 relating to staff on temporary contracts could be misconstrued. Officers proposed an amendment to the paragraph to give clarity that staff on temporary contracts who had satisfactorily completed 6 months would not be subject to probationary period upon converting to a permanent contract.

In addition, paragraph 5.2.3 of the policy, which referenced the length of probationary period, should read six or twelve months for the probationary period.

Consultation with relevant trade unions had been undertaken and briefings were arranged for managers to assist in implementation of the new policy.

The following issues were discussed:

The Union representatives welcomed the new policy and agreed the proposed minor alterations.

**Decision:**

- a) The Joint Consultative Committee submitted comments to the Employment Matters Committee.

**8 Flexible Retirement Policy**

**Discussion:**

The Head of Employee Relations introduced the report; she highlighted that the previous policy provided only a policy statement. The proposals significantly expanded on the previously policy providing clarity on eligibility and process enabling staff to make an informed choice. She added that this would enable the Council to keep the knowledge and experience of older staff for a longer period assisting with recruitment and retention.

The following issues were discussed:

Union representatives welcomed the policy.

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### **Decision:**

- a) The Joint Consultative Committee submitted comments to the Employment Matters Committee.

### **Chairperson**

### **Date:**

**Steve Dickens, Democratic Services Officer**

Telephone: 01634 332115

Email: [democratic.services@medway.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@medway.gov.uk)