

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Wednesday, 28 September 2011
7.00pm to 7.35pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Avey, Carr (Chairman), Christine Godwin,
Paul Godwin, Iles, Irvine and Mackinlay

In Attendance: Elizabeth Benjamin, Senior Lawyer - Litigation
Paula Charker, Employee Relations Manager
Ralph Edwards, Head of HR
Carrie McKenzie-Lloyd, Head of Organisational Change
Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services
Caroline Salisbury, Democratic Services Officer

357 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 29 June 2011 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

358 Apologies for absence

There were none.

359 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

360 Declarations of interest

The Assistant Director (Organisational Services) declared, on behalf of all officers attending the meeting), a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 (Proposals on pay). She asked Members if they agreed if officers could remain in order to introduce the report and minute the discussion. Members agreed that all officers should remain in the room for the duration of the item.

361 Proposals on Pay

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which set out the proposals on pay, including changes to incremental progression. The Cabinet had considered the Medium Term Financial Plan on 6 September 2011 which reviewed the major financial issues facing the Council over the next three

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years and provided a framework for the more detailed preparation of the draft revenue budget over the next three years. It was noted that the funding gap for the next financial year was projected at £9.5 million and that incremental progression cost the Council £1.6 million. As part of the decisions made by Cabinet, it authorised the commencement of a consultation aimed at freezing incremental progression for the next two years to meet the financial constraints set out in the plan.

The report provided an analysis of pay arrangements and reviewed the possible options available to limit the continuing financial increases due to incremental progression. Appendix 3 to the report set out the consultation and timetable with the trade unions and employees which allowed for 90 days consultation. The consultation period had started on 19 September 2011 and was due to end on 21 December 2011.

The committee discussed the possible circumstances of the Council having to dismiss and re-engage staff should the Council and Trade Unions not reach a collective agreement on pay. Members commented that the only opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) to meet about this matter was currently during the consultation process. Members requested that a provisional meeting of the JCC was added to the timetable, to take place should a collective agreement not be reached, after the 90 day consultation period had ended and prior to Employment Matters Committee on 18 January 2012.

Members also indicated that they would like to address the issue of low paid employees in a similar way to the one-off payment agreed last year. The current pay structure and long incremental grades system was also discussed and the committee agreed that a timescale should now be applied to the work being carried out on whether the current pay structure was fit for purpose.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the details of the proposal outlined in section 4 of the report and the consultation process for staff and trade unions;
- (b) request that officers attempt to reach a collective agreement with the trade unions in an effort to address the issue of low paid workers earning under £19,000, in a similar manner to last year's one-off payment;
- (c) add a provisional meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee to the proposed timetable (on page 22 of the agenda) at 6pm on 18 January 2012 should the Council and Trade Unions not reach a collective agreement on pay;
- (d) request a report detailing the options for further work to assess whether the current pay structure, including the long incremental grades, is fit for purpose.

362 Budget Proposals and Implications for Staff

Discussion:

The Employee Relations Manager introduced the report which provided details of staffing issues in relation to the reductions due to the budget deficit and loss of funding from April 2011 since the last Committee meeting in June 2011. The report set out the position of staffing reductions from April 2011 consisting of 157 posts and that 86 posts were subject to redundancy. The report also provided details of new reviews which had been instigated since April 2011. This included the Better for Less programme, where consultation was due to end on 30 September 2011.

The committee was also advised that, following the end of their consultation, the Youth Offending Team had now been given notice for early November 2011 (page 39 of the agenda) unless staff were redeployed elsewhere in the council. The Youth Service review had also now been completed, resulting in two redundancies.

Members requested that, although not within the remit of the committee for decision-making purposes, in future an additional column was added to the table shown at Appendix A (page 37 of the agenda) giving information on the implications of the reduction in posts to the service.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the present position and the support arrangements for staff;
- (b) request that an additional column is added to the "Summary of Reductions" table (as shown in Appendix A to the report) giving information on the implications of the reduction in posts to the service.

363 Joint Consultative Committee Update

Decision:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which provided details of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) held on 5 July 2011, where a presentation and discussion took place on the current and future issues and challenges facing the Council. The report also provided details of a proposal to amend the JCC's Terms of Reference to enable the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) to be represented on the JCC given the Council's decision to officially recognise the RCN.

Members discussed the benefit of the proposed change to the terms of reference and the flexible approach it introduced with the recognition of future trade unions.

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Discussion:

The Committee agreed to:

- (a) note the discussions of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 5 July 2011, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) agree an amendment to the Joint Consultative Committee's Terms of Reference to enable additional recognised trade unions to be appointed to the Joint Consultative Committee, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

364 Equalities Working Group Update

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Organisational Services, submitted a report which informed the Committee of a recent meeting of the Equalities Working Group with representatives from the Black Workers Forum, Disabled Workers Forum and the LGBT Forum held on 12 July 2011. The meeting included a summary of progress from each of the Forums over the previous six months, together with reports on the Equality Act 2010, Changes to Age Discrimination Law, Positive About Disability Symbol and Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index 2012.

Members discussed the notes of the last meeting of the group and requested that an update on progress on initiatives was included in future.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and requested that the notes of the Equalities Working Group included an update on equalities initiatives.

Chairman

Date:

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