

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Joint Consultative Committee**  
**Wednesday, 28 January 2026**  
**6.00pm to 6.38pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

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

Employee Side Representatives: Tania Earnshaw UNISON (Vice Chairperson), Philip Bunn ASCL, Louise Stevenson AEP.

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

**1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sands, and Trade Union representative Mark Hammond UNISON.

**2 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 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.

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

Councillor Peake disclosed that he was a member UNISON.

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

### 5 Pay Negotiations 2026/2027

#### Discussion

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which set out the progress of the pay negotiations for the financial year 2026/2027, and the Councils pay offer for 2026/27 for referral to Full Council for agreement. She advised that the report suggested a 3% increase however it had always been a commitment to match with inflation when looking at the cost of living award which was at 3.2% at the time of publication, however it had in fact risen to 3.4%.

The suggestion of a 3.4% pay rise was welcomed as the bare minimum. It was queried how the proposed % figure would avoid adverse impact on staff with protected characteristics, particularly lower income groups, and in relation to disability, race and gender. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that as part of the evaluation of MedPay these figures were being monitored closely for impacts and concerns about any potential age related discrimination were being watched closely. However the ability to move with the grades appeared to be positive with a recent progression round 88 successful applications, with 41 at Grade 3, indicating progression opportunities for lower graded staff.

It was suggested that the Council was an employer of convenience not choice which would continue if pay did not increase with inflation, and that long standing staff had normalised pressures. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that the staff survey had not indicated this.

The UNISON representative raised a query on the level of sleep-in payments as comments recently heard had suggested that Kent County Council were paying more, which was impacting recruitment. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that she would verify this information, however it was not something she was aware of and had not been raised through existing HR networks

The UNISON representative also stated that the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) had been much more creative the previous year. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that the Council remained competitive in comparison to neighbouring authorities and further enhancements were being explored.

The AEP representative requested that Educational Psychology Service also be considered for Professional Registration Fees in any proposals relating to

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professional fees. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that there were many other professional groups across the Council who incurred fees which would all need to be considered in any such proposals.

### **Decision:**

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

## **6 Pay Policy Statement 2026/27**

### **Discussion**

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which presented the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2026/2027, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, for referral to Full Council for agreement. The key change this year was an amendment removing the requirement of approval of Full Council to any appointment above Assistant Director with a salary over £100,000, which had caused delays in recruitment and made it difficult to respond quickly to market conditions. The proposal was to increase this threshold to £150,000, with approval instead delegated to the Appointments Committee.

On discussion it was agreed that the wording at '2.60 Re-engagement under a contract for services' in the policy, should be reworded for clarity.

### **Decision:**

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

## **7 Organisational Change**

### **Discussion**

The Head of Employee Relations introduced the report which detailed the new reorganisations of services and transfers under the TUPE regulations for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 and updated the Committee on on-going reviews that had previously been reported but not concluded.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

## **8 Early retirement and redundancy payments**

### **Discussion**

The Head of Employee Relations introduced the report which presented all decisions taken in relation to early retirements and severance payments for the

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period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025. The Committee noted that, as previously asked for, requests for flexible retirement were also captured and would be included as a standard item in the report going forward.

In response to a query concerning transparency and inconsistency in application of early retirement requests, the Head of Employee Relations advised that this was addressed by the Flexible Retirement Policy agreed by Committee at the September meeting and each case was assessed on its merits. This policy was live and there was an appeal process.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

### **Chairperson**

**Date:**

**Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer**

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