

Medway Council
Meeting of Employment Matters Committee
Thursday, 2 July 2026
7.00pm to 7.43pm

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, Hackwell BEM, Hamilton and Peake

Substitutes: Councillors: Mrs Turpin

In Attendance: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer
Hary Steer, HR Consultant and Policy Lead
Nicola Trainor, Head of Employee Relations

121 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Williams.

122 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 30 April 2026 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

The record of the Joint Consultative Committee held on 30 April 2026 was noted by the Committee.

123 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

124 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

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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 Peake disclosed that he was a member UNISON.

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

125 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 October 2025 to 31 March 2026 and updates on on-going reviews that had previously been reported at Employment Matters Committee but not concluded.

Staff transfers - In response to a question it was confirmed that any strategic advantages with regard to the transfer of Upnor Castle and Temple Manor had been a cabinet decision, however she could confirm that there had been two affected members of staff who could have transferred with the service but had not and had instead been redeployed within Medway Council to other roles.

In response to a question as to whether staff people transferring from Medway Norse under TUPE was going to be more advantageous for them or disadvantageous for them, the Head of Employee Relations advised that all the staff had to be transferred on their existing terms and conditions. However Some of those staff would have originally been with the Council before they had been transferred out, so there was now a number of staff on various different types of terms and conditions and the next phase was to look at harmonisation of those terms and conditions. It was confirmed that the funding had been removed from the Macmillan team.

Reorganisation - In response to a question it was confirmed that the one-week consultation period was deemed a sufficient period of time the reorganisation of the senior leadership team in Regeneration, Culture and Environment, as there had already been a lot of informal conversation therefore a long consultation period was not required. If it had been requested, the consultation period could have been extended. It was confirmed that in light of local government reorganisation, the approach was minimal changes as the aim internally was only to build capacity within the system so we're in the best position to deal with the changes required for the new unitary authority. Part of the business case here, had been around creating capacity at senior leadership level based on spans of control, and ensuring consistency with strategic service managers in other business areas with similar responsibilities. There was no intention to undertake further internal organisational change now other than harmonisation.

Decision

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

126 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 period 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026. The Committee had previously requested that flexible retirements were also captured, so this had now been included as a standard item for this report.

Decision

The Employment Matters Committee noted the report.

127 Mileage Rates and Car User Status Policy Changes

Discussion

The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which considered the implications of the recent HMRC increases in tax free mileage rates and recommended minor amendments to the current car user status policy to reflect changes in HR and management practice.

Mileage claim calculation - In response to a query as to why mileage rates were included directly within the policy rather than by reference to HMRC guidance, it was explained that the Council's scheme was based on local terms and conditions and did not directly mirror HMRC rates. The HMRC changes related solely to the tax-free element of mileage reimbursement. It was acknowledged that the policy was complex and overdue for comprehensive review, particularly in light of emerging issues around hybrid working and anticipated local government reorganisation.

In response to a query it was confirmed that it was not possible to profit from having less distance to travel from home and that whilst the automated system did not pick up anomalies there were checks in place and if any fraud was found disciplinary action could be taken.

In response to a query on the calculation complexity, it was confirmed that contractual arrangements remained linked to an employee's designated workplace, although hybrid working arrangements had created additional complexities. Existing provisions required employees to deduct their normal commuting mileage when claiming expenses for journeys undertaken from home to alternative work locations. A broader review of travel arrangements was being undertaken as part of the Gun Wharf refurbishment project to develop a new staff travel plan. This work would consider hybrid working

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arrangements, office capacity, parking allocation, climate change objectives and the future operation of the Council's mileage scheme.

Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme - Concerns were raised about potential changes to salary sacrifice arrangements by central government. The Chief Organisational Culture Officer advised that this scheme was regarded as an important employee benefit which they would seek to retain. The situation was being monitored closely.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting which had also raised similar issue discussed above.

Decision

- a) The Employment Matters Committee agreed the new HMRC rates to be reflected in the car and travel allowances policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- b) The Employment Matters Committee agreed the updates to the car user status policy to reflect changes in HR and management practice as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

128 Redeployment Procedure

Discussion

The HR Consultant and Policy Lead introduced the report which sought approval for a revised Redeployment Procedure for Medway Council. The procedure provided greater clarity on the priority order of redeployment, how the process worked for redeployees, the responsibilities of parties involved in the process, and a concrete procedure for health and disability-related redeployment. It also included updated appendices, such as the introduction of an Employee Profile Form that aligned with our statutory obligations to provide a non-competitive procedure for redeployees. The revised procedure mirrored current redeployment practice within the Council, strengthened the Council's statutory obligations, and reflected the stakeholder feedback and operational data collected on the procedure.

In response to a question as to why someone on a fixed-term contract would be made redundant, the Head of Employee Relations advised that the ending of a fixed-term contract constituted a dismissal in law and, depending on length of service, could attract redundancy rights. The Council also wished to retain talented employees where suitable opportunities existed.

In response to a concern raised that the procedure suggested that individuals could lose redundancy entitlements if they refused a role, the Head of Employee Relations clarified that the council was required to look for suitable alternative employment. However if an employee felt a role was not suitable, there would be a discussion around that, initially informal but potentially supported by written reasons, it was important to remember that anyone who

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was redeployed had a four-week trial period in the new role which gave both the employee and manager an opportunity to decide whether it was genuinely a suitable alternative.

Concerns were expressed about the significant difference in protections available depending on the timing of a pregnancy loss, as a family might experience a loss at one gestation point and have different rights depending on whether a baby survived briefly after birth or not and queried whether there was something that could be considered regarding viability, the 24-week threshold, and how compassionately the policy was applied.

Officers advised that the provisions currently reflected statutory requirements. However, they acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed to consider whether additional measures could be incorporated to provide greater support and compassion within the policy framework. It was noted that, irrespective of statutory protections, the Council would continue to provide support and consider individual circumstances sensitively.

Members noted the Joint Consultative Committee comments from the earlier meeting which had included concerns raised regarding the use of redeployment in cases involving occupational health, particularly where staff were unable to return to their previous role, and specific concerns regarding communication with colleagues who were placed on the redeployment register, and some typographical errors which would be amended before publication.

Decision

- a) The Committee approved Option A and agreed to adopt the revised Redeployment Procedure at Appendix A and its appendices, Appendix B-E) for implementation in July 2026.
- b) The Committee noted the key improvements in health and disability-related redeployment, as well as increased clarity throughout the procedure document as set out in the Summary of Changes at Appendix F.
- c) The Committee agreed to the provision of targeted communications and training for managers, especially those in positions of making frequent hiring decisions, to support consistency and cooperation with the revised procedure, ensuring redeployees are protected and treated fairly.

Chairperson

Date:

Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332115

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

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