



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM  
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge,  
Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 26 January 2018 from 10.01am - 11.19am**

**Membership**

Present

Councillor John Clarke (Chair)  
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell  
Councillor John Longdon  
Councillor Jackie Morris

Absent

Councillor Liaqat Ali

Councillor Brian Grocock (Substitute for Councillor Liaqat Ali)

**Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Wayne Bowcock	- Deputy Chief Fire Office
Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

**15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None. In the absence of Councillor Liaqat Ali, Councillor Brian Grocock substituted.

**16 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

**17 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**18 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the report which updates the Committee on the key human resources metrics for the Quarter 3 period, 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2017.

Whilst the report provides full details, the following points were highlighted:

- (i) there was very little change in sickness levels compared to the previous quarter with 66% of sickness being considered as long-term illness;
- (ii) 20 members of staff have left the organisation (6 wholetime, 10 retained and 4 support staff) and 6 joined;
- (iii) there was 1 disciplinary.

Members of the Committee were interested in the reasons why staff left the Service and requested that this information (gathered at the optional exit interview) is provided to the Committee. It is noted that national work which includes examination of such reasons is taking place so it was agreed that a report would be submitted to the Committee once this work was completed as it would provide valuable comparison information.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) for a report exploring the reasons why staff left the Service, to be submitted to a future meeting.**

## **19 PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE OF THE RISK AND ASSURANCE SECTION**

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks approval for a restructure of the Risk and Assurance Section.

The following points were highlighted:

- (i) following the recommendations of a peer review which suggested that the Service would benefit from closer internal collaboration, and the results of functional analysis which identified areas of common work within the 'Corporate Risk Management' and 'Operational Assurance and Health and Safety Risk Management' Teams, a restructure is proposed;
- (ii) the required vacancies now exist to support a smooth transition with a single 'Risk and Assurance' manager;
- (iii) the proposed restructure would also involve changing a currently vacant full time CAD operative post to part time whilst providing an uplift to an administrative post. In year 1 this would provide savings of £12,367 but this figure would reduce as post holders advance through the post increment system.

It is noted that the high risks within the Corporate Risk Register are submitted for consideration to the Finance and Resources Committee every six months.

**RESOLVED to approve the proposed restructure of the Risk and Assurance Section of the Service and receive an update reviewing the changes six months after implementation.**

## **20 MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND FIT WORKFORCE - FUTURE CHALLENGES**

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which outlines the work undertaken to maintain the health and fitness of the workforce, particularly in relation to additional challenges of an older workforce since the firefighter retirement age was extended to the age of 60 years.

The Service's Occupational Therapy Team have again excelled and now hold bronze, silver and gold awards in the Workforce Well-being Scheme for their preventative and health promotion work. It is noted that in addition to achieving recognition for valuable work, participating in the scheme is beneficial as it introduces new approaches and initiatives.

The following points were highlighted from the report:

- (i) musculo-skeletal injury accounted for 30.6% of absence in operational employees during 2017;
- (ii) a Wellbeing Strategy is being developed which will refer to a range of illnesses including mental health, stress and anxiety and depression;
- (iii) in addition to services and support provided by the Service, employees are also able to access support through MIND, Blue Light, and the Firefighters Charity. A peer support network of trained staff is increasing within the Service and proving useful as a first point of contact. The Employee Assistance Programme is also a potential route to access support;
- (iv) as the size of the service reduces and there are fewer posts, it becomes more difficult to find appropriate redeployment opportunities if personnel need to change their role through ill health or injury. Previously staff did not tend to transfer between roles covered by either the green or grey book, but this may now be a possibility due to the restricted availability of vacant posts, however it would result in changes to the employee's terms and conditions of employment, pay and pension;
- (v) an older workforce will result in additional care issues which need to be supported and which are likely to require additional financial investment in future years.

In response to a question from the Committee, if it is believed that an employee cannot be supported back into work with the Service, the Occupational Health Team will refer them to an independent Occupational Consultant who will assess that employee and provide an independent opinion, determining if they are unable to meet the requirements of their role or if they would be able to work elsewhere. If they are in a medically capable condition to find alternative employment outside of the Service, then they will not be eligible to receive ill health retirement, but if alternative work is not possible, even in the longer-term, they will receive ill health retirement but benefits are dependent on a range of circumstances including length of service.

Councillor's comments included:

- (a) the implications of an aging workforce need to be specifically highlighted with Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI);
- (b) while there may need to be additional support for older firefighting employees, it's important that the Service doesn't give the impression that younger employees are valued more than older ones as this is not the case;
- (c) in the majority of instances where mental trauma is experienced, if timely support is received, this can provide the best outcomes;
- (d) it is beneficial to the individual and the Service if an alternative role within the Service can be found if the employee is unable to continue in their role. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the workforce which is often the result of the Service's investment in training of employees; this needs to be recognised and valued.

**RESOLVED to note the report and applaud the Occupational Health Team for their award winning work.**

## **21 UPDATE ON APPRENTICESHIPS**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented an update to the Committee on the development of Apprenticeships.

The cost of the apprenticeship levy is in the region of 0.5% of the National Insurance collected from any organisation with over 250 employees, so NFRS is expecting to pay approximately £115,000 during 2017/18, but can draw back these funds to training apprentices.

As a result of the Public-Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017, the Service will need to annually engage apprentice's equivalent to 2.3% of workforce or be reported to the Secretary of State, although it is unclear what the penalty will be for non-compliance. Whilst NFRS are working to meet this target with appropriate, not age-restricted apprenticeship schemes, other fire authorities have declared that they do not intend to take part in the scheme and will be 'writing off' the apprenticeship levy as a cost.

NFRS has developed a new Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship and applied to become a recognised employer provider on the register of approved training providers to ensure the levy funds can be drawn upon.

It is anticipated that new Firefighter Apprentices will be recruited in the autumn of 2018, be paid to national firefighter grades and undertake a 2 year apprenticeship. Further apprenticeships in Business Fire Safety and Community Safety Advisor are also likely to be developed.

It has been agreed that the Service will also draw on the levy to fund ILM Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager apprenticeship with Sheffield College for 10-12 middle managers for a 2-year course in management and leadership.

As NFRS is a fairly small organisation, there is not an expectation to employ the apprenticeships after their 2 years, but NFRS intends to engage all successful graduating

firefighter apprentices where at all possible. This may not be an option in other areas of the Service, such as ICT and Finance, where employment will be dependent on vacancies occurring at the appropriate time.

The Service is not able to host apprenticeships on behalf of other Fire Authorities unless an arm's length organisation is created, so the feasibility of this is being investigated.

The majority of the levy paid in Year 1 will need to be written off as there was not enough time available to enable NFRS to develop their scheme, so this will need to be explained to the Secretary of State. It is disappointing that the retained firefighter post is not eligible for the apprenticeship scheme due to the level of their contracted hours.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) for a report to be submitted to the Full Fire Authority with reference to the disappointing apprenticeship eligibility criteria which does not allow the scheme to be available to potential retained firefighters.**

## **22 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **23 EXEMPT MINUTES**

Subject to providing the correct membership details, the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.