



**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 16 October 2015 from 10.01am - 11.31am**

**Membership**

Present

Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan  
Councillor Mike Pringle  
Councillor Liz Yates

Absent

Councillor Eunice Campbell  
Councillor Michael Payne

Councillor Brian Grocock (Substitute for Councillor Eunice Campbell)  
Councillor Darrell Pulk (Substitute for Councillor Michael Payne)

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

Wayne Bowcock	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development
Gail Armitage	- Occupational Health Manager
Matt Sismey	- Equality and Diversity Officer
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

**22 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING**

In the absence of Councillor Michael Payne, Councillor Darrel Pulk was appointed Chair for the meeting.

**23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Michael Payne (other County Council Business)  
Councillor Eunice Campbell (personal)

**24 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **25 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2015 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the presiding Chair.

## **26 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the detailed report which updates the Committee on the key human resources metrics for the quarter 2 period 1 July to 30 September 2015.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) sickness absence has slightly increased to 4% during quarter 2;
- (b) long term absence accounted for 41.5% of absence during this period;
- (c) the main reasons for absence continues to be musculo skeletal and mental health issues which is following a national trend;
- (d) a breakdown of absence for whole time, non-uniformed and control staff is included in Appendix B to the report but it should be noted that with fewer staff, individual sickness absences can have a larger impact on the statistics;
- (e) the peer support programme for colleagues seeking informal mental health support is progressing and the Service is liaising with colleges to secure appropriate training. Following an initial canvas for interest, 15 colleagues have expressed an interest in attending a 5 day course;
- (f) the majority of mental health issues appear to originate from personal issues;
- (g) resilience training is to be available for managers who wish to attend;
- (h) Appendix C to the report provides a ranking chart of how other Authorities are performing with regard to sickness levels. Nottinghamshire ranks 6<sup>th</sup> with regard to whole time and control staff and 15<sup>th</sup> for whole time, Control and Support Staff. However, it should be noted that other Services have a different ratio of staff, including retained, who have not been included in the figures and it is not clear exactly how statistics have been interpreted;
- (i) a seasonal peak of short term absence is predicted during the winter months but the Service is offering flu jabs to staff this year. (Some fire fighters in other parts of the Country are administering flu jabs to citizens).

Councillors commented:

- (j) the Service has made good progress in addressing sickness absence;
- (k) the peer support programme is welcomed as sharing and just speaking with people can make a huge difference to mental health and wellbeing;

- (l) the small decline in long term absence at the beginning of the year is positive, especially if the trend continues.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **27 EQUALITIES PERFORMANCE**

Matt Sismey, Equality and Diversity Officer, presented the report which updates the Committee on the Equality and Diversity work undertaken since the last meeting.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) the Service is now ranked as 91 in the top 100 national employers engaged with Stonewall;
- (b) the last whole time recruitment campaign took place in 2012 so it has not been possible to try to meet the equality recruitment targets of ethnic minorities and women when there aren't posts to recruit to;
- (c) it is far more difficult to attract ethnic minority applicants to some retained recruitments due to the make-up of the local communities within the required travelling time of the stations;
- (d) the requirement to be fit, mobile and strong does limit the recruitment of citizens with disabilities as firefighters which is currently 0.9%. The reduction in office based staff has reduced the need for recruitment, but for non-uniformed roles, disability is 7.2%. Existing employees and new applicants are encouraged to report any disabilities, including dyslexia, and mental health issues;
- (e) local stations will be asked to use local knowledge to try and engage the local community, with specific focus on minority groups and women, but expectations must be managed;
- (f) work continues to improve engagement with LGBT communities with more than 40 people expressing an interest and with a further event to be held at the Retford Fire Station;
- (g) the Service is active in promoting the 'Future Leaders' programme;
- (h) 39% of the workforce are aged 45-60 years old, future planning is taking place in preparation of staff leaving the Service although age is relative and overridden by fitness;
- (i) fitness is vital and all operative staff are required to achieve a fitness level of 42. Were staff to fail, the Service works with them to regain and maintain the fitness level;
- (j) although there is no requirement for employees to retire at a specific age, very few decide to continue working beyond the pensionable age with currently

approximately 27 people per year leaving the Service, including for health and disability reasons;

- (k) the disability, ethnic and minority targets, which are internally set, need to be revisited.

Members welcomed the paper and the efforts to ensure that employee make-up of the Service represented the communities within Nottinghamshire.

It was suggested that where whole time firefighters retired from or left the Service, it would be beneficial to all parties if retained staff, who are already fully trained, were given the opportunity to apply.

**RESOLVED to note the report and agree to receive a revised performance framework for equality by April 2016.**

## **28 ESTABLISHMENT OF SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR ROLE**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the report which requested that the Committee consider recommending to the Full Authority that a Systems Administrator post be established within the Human Resources Section.

The establishment of this part-time post, which has been evaluated at Grade 3, has been identified following a review of systems support requirements to ensure that the system infrastructure and data integrity are maintained and that systems can be developed in line with technology and user demands.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (i) **support the creation of the post of Systems Administrator (18.5 hours per week);**
- (ii) **recommend that the Full Fire Authority approve the establishment of this post.**

## **29 THE NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WELLBEING AT WORK: WORKPLACE HEALTH AWARD SCHEME**

Gail Armitage, Occupational Health Manager, presented the report which informs members that the Service has been awarded the 'bronze level' of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Wellbeing at Work Scheme which is run by Nottinghamshire County Council.

The scheme focuses on five key themes which are:

- substance use/misuse;
- emotional mental wellbeing;
- healthy weight;
- protecting health;
- safety at work.

The Service fully believes that it is operating at the gold standard but the scheme is structured so that organisations provide evidence of their activity, support and promotion in each of the intervention tiers and once successfully completed, advance to the next tier. The plan, implementation and assessment of work focusing in the bronze intervention tier of 'Health promotion and information' took approximately a year. The next intervention tier for silver focuses on 'Enabling and increasing access to local well-being services'.

Involvement of the scheme has helped to highlight some areas of health and wellbeing which the Service could further promote or more widely support using alternative methods. It is also a good tool for benchmarking.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the achievement of the Workplace Health Bronze Award;**
- (2) for the Chief Fire Officer to arrange for a letter of congratulation to be sent to the Occupational Health Team, on behalf of the Committee, with regard to the work undertaken to promote employee wellbeing and achieve the award.**

## **30 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items 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, as defined in paragraphs 1 & 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

## **31 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS RESTRUCTURE**

Bridget Aherne, Head of Corporate Communications, presented the report which proposes changes to the Corporate Communications Structure.

**RESOLVED to approve the recommendations within the report and added to during the meeting.**

## **32 REGRADING OF POSTS**

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which, following a job evaluation where the outcome was considered by the Job Evaluation Panel, proposes regrading of posts.

**RESOLVED to note the recommendations within the report.**