



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

HUMAN RESOURCES

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge,
Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 14 July 2017 from 10.01 am - 11.15 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke (Chair)

Councillor Liaqat Ali

Councillor Andrew Brown

Councillor Vaughan Hopewell

Councillor Jackie Morris

Councillor Andrew Brown (substitute for John Longdon)

Absent

Councillor John Longdon

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Wayne Bowcock - Deputy Chief Fire Officer, NFRS

Tracy Crump - Head of People and Organisational Development, NFRS

James Welbourn - Governance Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor John Longdon - annual leave

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4 REQUEST FOR UNPAID LEAVE

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer at NFRS introduced a report outlining a request for a period of unpaid leave. The Head of this particular department has indicated that they are satisfied that the existing work can be picked up within the existing team structure,

RESOLVED to approve the request for unpaid leave.

5 WORKFORCE PLAN 2017-19

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer at NFRS introduced a report reviewing the Corporate Workforce Plan for 2016-18, as well as informing Members of the updated plan for 2017-19.

The Workforce Plan is a key document helping NFRS to project future changes in the workforce.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) there are approximately £2.25 million worth of savings needed by 2019;
- (b) the wholetime establishment used to include specialist rescue teams; these have been disbanded and absorbed back into two different locations. These stations now carry out specialist rescue in addition to general firefighting duties;
- (c) there are a reduced number of flexible duty officers;
- (d) NFRS is currently under-established – this has a knock-on effect into the collective agreement;
- (e) it can be difficult to keep hold of retained staff due to changes in the type of work available in small villages and towns (previously more shift work was available to allow workers to be available at other times to be a retained firefighter). There has been a big push over the last few years to try and be more flexible with retained staff; however, firefighting has become more technical, so training can be an issue for retained staff.

28 retained staff started last year, but over the course of the year, out of the total pool of retained staff, 37 have left;

Following questions from Councillors, further information was provided:

- (f) retained firefighters are remunerated at nationally agreed rates. There is an annual fee, along with payment for training nights, and a call-out fee paid when necessary. The payment system is antiquated.

Retained staff have to work or live within 5 minutes of their station;

- (g) Eastwood and Collingham Fire Stations are good examples of locations where retained firefighters get involved in medical call-outs. Collingham has just entered into the Emergency First Responder (EFR) trial, and they have responded to more EFR calls in six weeks than the total number of fire related calls they get in a year.

Expanding NFRS' role to medical emergencies is significant in local communities;

- (h) the presence of fixed term contractors in ICT is due to the enhanced ICT security that is needed at the present time;
- (i) the methodology used for turnover of staff is a prediction (based on knowledge from the previous year), so can turn out to be wrong. The prediction is made more difficult now as there are no statutory retirement dates anymore;
- (j) NFRS are going out to communities to try and encourage females and BME candidates to apply for new roles. Support is being put in place to help people through the application process;
- (k) the educational level expected of recruits is Level 2 for numeracy and literacy. Once in the role, Level 3 would be expected to be reached;
- (l) Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue have had significant success with female recruitment. Over 50% of participants on the recruitment course in Gloucestershire have been female.

It is understood that following positive action 40% of applicants within Greater Manchester were female;

- (m) the majority of long-term absences at NFRS are due to mental health issues or musculo-skeletal problems. Mental health issues are now more prevalent, and a lot of work has been done to de-stigmatise these issues;
- (n) debt counselling for all employees is provided through Westfield, MIND, or the firefighter's charity. Westfield have a 24 hour helpline;
- (o) changes to the workforce means that the rostering agreement is now out of date;
- (p) there is likely to be recruitment to wholetime firefighter positions in 2018 due to under establishment. It is anticipated that 24-27 people will leave the Service every year due to retirement and ill health;
- (q) the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy means that from April 2017 2.3% of the organisation should be apprentices. This can be avoided by paying the Levy in full;
- (r) age will be a significant impact on the next generation of firefighters, particularly with regard to supporting those between the ages of 50 and 60.

If a firefighter gets to 55 and can no longer pass a fitness test, the authority can require them to retire or resign. An alternative is redeployment into a non-operational role; however, after changes to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 there were a lot of staff redeployed into non-operational roles, and as a result, these roles no longer exist for other members of staff;

- (s) the pensions dispute between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the government and fire service employers is still live, and is predicated on an appeal over age discrimination. The appeal is on 12 December;

- (t) the FBU learning fund provides money for staff to gain education and training. This year, the FBU asked if staff could have time off from their posts to attend. So far, 37 people have gone through a Level 3 NVQ in fitness advice.

The Chair and Members thanked Tracy Crump for the work that had gone into this report.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

6 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development at NFRS updated Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 April – 30 June 2017.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) absence reduced by over 16% compared to the previous quarter. This is not a complete surprise, as quarter 4 includes absences from the winter season;
- (b) mental health issues tend to be long-term, and are dealt with on a case by case basis. There is support through Occupational Health, Westfield, and in some cases, a trauma counsellor;
- (c) there was a pending employment tribunal from the last quarter; this has now been struck out;
- (d) on leaving the service, employees get an exit interview as part of the leaving service.

RESOLVED to endorse the report.