

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
	HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE	
date	5 October 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Human Resources (HR) Committee on progress over the last three months in implementing the HR Action Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of ongoing improvements with the HR department, members of the HR Committee have asked for continuous updates on progress. These progress reports were as a result of the findings of the HR Review conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in November 2006.

2.2 In addition HR Committee had also requested an update on issues such as sickness absence, formal disciplinary's, grievances, harassment & bullying, employment tribunal cases and staffing numbers. These issues are known as HR metrics.

3. REPORT

HUMAN RESOURCES ACTION PLAN

3.1 Members will recall that following the HR Review an interim Head of HR was appointed in January 2007, this assignment concluded in June 2007, and the individual contracted as a HR Operations Manager has undertaken the duties of interim Head of HR.

3.2 As part of this arrangement the interim HR Manager has continued to progress the HR Action Plan previously submitted to HR Committee. An analysis of progress to date and future activity is outlined below.

Item & Objective	Progress to Date	Future Plans
1. Formulate & implement process and review for optimum contribution from HR team	Template of HR skills has been produced. This has been used in recently conducted Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) for HR staff.	Continue to use template in PDR's for HR staff.
2. Review the use of HR support and expertise	Patterns and magnitude of use of external HR support established.	Policy to be drawn-up and implemented regarding use of external support throughout NFRS/

<p>3. Review and update all HR policies and procedures</p>	<p>45 HR policies & procedures have so far been identified for review, update and creation. A joint consultation group has been established, comprising representatives from all the recognised Representative Bodies. So far, 10 policies have been agreed by the joint consultation group, 21 policies have been drafted and are in consultation, 12 have been drafted and are awaiting consultation, and 2 were approved by CFA at their meeting on 7 September.</p>	<p>All 45 policies to be drafted, consulted on and implemented by the end of 2007; policies to be put on intranet.</p>
<p>4. Formulate process for efficient & effective dealing with discipline and grievance cases</p>	<p>The number of discipline and grievance cases has significantly reduced (see HR Metrics section below). More use is now made of informal resolution, with formal resolution only being used when absolutely necessary. Formal process has also been speeded –up. Above has been achieved with HR working closely with line managers.</p>	<p>Need to have formal Grievance, Discipline, and Capability procedures in place. This to be achieved by the end of 2007.</p>
<p>5. Formulate & implement process for PDR's</p>	<p>Revised PDR process formulated, but due to Unison objections, has only been implemented for Uniformed staff. Existing PDR scheme used in 2007 for non-uniformed staff. All staff should have had a PDR by the end of August 2007.</p>	<p>Aim is to have one common PDR form and process for all staff, rather than having one scheme for uniformed staff, and another for non-uniformed staff. Discussions to be held with Unison to try and achieve this aim.</p>
<p>6. Formulate guidance for dealing with sickness absence and ill-health retirement</p>	<p>Management of Sickness Absence policy & procedure implemented on 1 July. Should lead to improvements and greater consistency in the management of sickness absence. Discussions held with Representative Bodies and Occupational Health over the management of ill health retirements. Improvements made in the process.</p>	<p>Formal review of the new management of Sickness Absence policy & procedure to take place in October 2007, with any identified improvements then been made. Finalisation of revised management of ill health process to be discussed with Representative bodies.</p>

7. Evaluate use of Firstcare	Evaluation undertaken, with conclusion that we should bring this activity back in house (annual cost to NFRS is £70K)	Detailed proposal being worked-up to bring what Firstcare do back in-house, with aim of doing so by end of March 2008.
8. Formulate and implement process to manage Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) and communicate as appropriate	All current policies reviewed for risk assessments and EIA's. These to be put in place where they do not exist. All new policies have EIA and risk assessment.	Continue work of putting in place EIA and risk assessments for all existing policies. Ensure that all new policies have EIA and risk assessment.
9. Optimise relationships with all Trade Unions (FBU, FOA, RFU, Unison)	Chief Fire Officer meets Brigade Committee of the FBU twice per year. HR Dept staff now attend Uniformed Panel Meetings	Put meetings with Trade Unions on the intranet. ACAS to possibly provide employee relations "health checks"
10. Produce HR Business Plan for 2007 / 08	HR Business Plan produced.	Plan to be implemented, monitored, and evaluated on an on-going basis.

In summary, significant progress has been made in all of the above workstreams, and matters are in hand in all areas to complete identified actions.

REVISED HR DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

- 3.3 Following their review of the HR Department, PwC proposed a revised organisational structure for the HR Department in November 2006 see at Appendix B. Amongst other things, this proposal involved the creation of two roles additional to the establishment (HR Officers) who would support staff in HR Operations, and the creation of a HR Manager (Corporate) . The cost of the two new HR Officer posts additional to the establishment being circa £40Kp.a. without on-costs.
- 3.4 Utilising the PwC proposal, the previous Interim Head of HR developed a proposed structure as outlined in Appendix C. This differed from the PwC structure in that: the staff in HR Operations reported to a newly created post of HR Operations Manager (they reported directly to the Head of HR in the PwC proposal); the staff in HR Administration reported to the Corporate HR Manager (there was no clear reporting line outlined in the PwC proposal); and only one newly created HR Support Officer was proposed (not two as per the PwC proposal). The Equalities and Diversity Officer, and Industrial Relations Officer reported to the Head of HR in this proposal, and not to the HR Manager (Corporate) as per the PwC proposal. The cost of the two posts additional to establishment (HR Manager Operations; HR Support Officer) being circa £65K p.a. without on-costs. All the HR jobs outlined in Appendix C have now been job evaluated, and appeals have been held. This structure has not as yet been put before the Fire Authority for approval.
- 3.5 An interim arrangement (Appendix A) has been put in place since 1 July 2007 does not involve any additional staff in HR. This is ensuring that the Service continues its improvements whilst addressing the HR issues relating to the proposed structure. In order to address the in- balance between professional staff numbers in HR Operations and HR Corporate, one member of HR Operations has been transferred as part of the interim arrangements to HR Corporate (HR Operations work having reduced, and HR Corporate work having grown relatively).

3.6 Rather than put the proposed structure as outlined in Appendix C to the HR Committee now for consideration, it is recommended that we carry on with the interim arrangements, and in light of the experience gained from operating the interim arrangements put forward a permanent HR Department structure for consideration to the next HR Committee. This will allow for a full assessment of:-

- current and projected workload between HR Operations and HR Corporate ;
- the span of control of the Head of HR, whether additional posts are required as originally proposed ; and
- reporting arrangements within the Department.

3.7 It is not felt that the continuation of the interim arrangements and the review of the HR Structure at Appendix C will affect staff currently in post. The roles have been re-evaluated and are subject to HR Committee approval. It is the intention to action these changes if approval is given. Additionally staff will be consulted on any arrangements.

HR METRICS

SICKNESS ABSENCE

3.8 The following represents a reflection of the absence figures for the quarter 1 April – 30 June 2007.

	This Quarter	Compared with previous Quarter	Compared with same quarter in 2006
Total Workforce	1,850 days lost	2,289 days lost (19% decrease)	1,882 days lost (0.17% decrease).
Uniformed (including Control; excluding Retained)	1,400 days lost	1,622 days (13.6% decrease)	1,335 days lost (0.48% increase).
Non-Uniformed	450.5 days lost	627 days lost (28% decrease)	547 days lost (17.6% decrease)

3.9 Members will note an encouraging reduction in sickness absence across all sections of the workforce. The HR team will continue to monitor this and continue to report to HR Committee.

DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCES ETC

3.10 Over the period 1st June – 31st August 2007:

- Disciplinary: 2
- Grievances: 2
- Harassment & Bullying: 2
- Dismissals (including ill health retirement): 3
- Current Employment Tribunal cases: 4 (1x sexual orientation discrimination; 1 x sex discrimination; 1 x disability discrimination; 1 x unlawful deduction from wages)

STAFFING NUMBERS

3.11 Over the period 1 June – 31 August 2007, we had 10 employees start, and 21 employees leave. Staffing in the Service at 31 July 2007 is highlighted below.

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	571	575	+4 (including 6 secondments out)
Retained	252	207.25 (376 persons)	- 44.75
Non-Uniformed	170	190 (154 permanent 10 funded FTC's 12 un-funded FTC's 14 agency staff / contractors)	+ 20

3.12 We have recently implemented improved controls over appointing employees and agency staff/ contractors, and are currently carrying out a review into the business case for each non-uniformed appointment additional to the establishment.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The HR team in conjunction with support from the finance department continue to monitor the financial impacts of the HR Action Plan. Additional costs associated with revised Job Evaluation outcomes and new posts recommended by the HR Review, have been balanced by the reduction in case work and the need to contract outside agencies.

4.2 The four pending employment tribunal cases will have financial implications in terms of legal costs. It is unknown as to whether any additional costs will emanate from the claims tabled.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Each objective plan output above will be subject to specific personnel implications to be identified individually.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial impact assessment has revealed no specific equality issues from within the report however each element of the HR Action Plan, revised policies and other actions will be subject to individual Equality Impact Assessment.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The risks associated with a poor performing HR function were identified in the PwC HR Review. This plan sets about mitigating those risks.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members endorse the report and the progress made to date, and agree to receive ongoing updates on progress through the Human Resources Committee structure.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

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Appendix A





