



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 22 January 2010

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on Human Resources issues within the Service

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of its remit, the Human Resources Committee of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority receive regular updates on human resources (HR) issues within the Service. This includes issues such as sickness absence, formal discipline, grievance, health and safety, employment tribunal cases and staffing numbers. These issues are known as HR metrics.
- 1.2 Reports are on a quarterly basis and allow the HR Committee to analyse ongoing issues and offer their guidance and scrutiny where applicable.

2. REPORT

HR METRICS - SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 2.1 The following represents a reflection of the absence figures for Quarter 2: 1 July 2009 – 31 September 2009.

Absence	Quarter 1 1 July 2009 – 31 Sept 2009	Compared with last quarter	Compared with same quarter of 2008	Cumulative total days lost for 2009/10	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Total workforce 156 employees	1576.5 days lost 2.06 days per employee	995.5 days lost 1.33 days per employee 58% increase	1359 days lost 1.77 days per employee 16% increase	2572 days lost	3.39 days per employee
Uniformed 115 employees excluding retained	1157 days lost 1.97 days per employee	759 days lost 1.32 days per employee 52.4% increase	1025 days lost 1.71 days per employee 12.9% increase	1916 days lost	3.29 days per employee
Non uniformed 41 employees	419.5 days lost 2.4 days per employee	236.5 days lost 1.37 days per employee 77.4% increase	334 days lost 1.95 days per employee 25.6% increase	656 days lost	3.77 days per employee
Long term sickness	Number of employees on long term sickness (defined as 28 days or more) between 1 July 2009 – 30 September 2009 = 34				

DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCES ETC

2.2 Over the period 1 September 2009 – 30 November 2009

- ⌚ Disciplinary: 0
- ⌚ Grievances: 5
- ⌚ Formal Management Sickness Absence Policy: 0
- ⌚ Dismissals including ill health retirements/redundancy: 1
- ⌚ Current Employment Tribunal cases: 1. Sex discrimination and constructive dismissal.

STAFFING NUMBERS

2.3 During the period 1 September 2009 – 31 December 2009, 59 employees commenced employment, and 26 left the Service. Establishment levels at 31 December 2009 are highlighted below.

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	569	557 (556.5 full time equivalents)	-12 (-12.5 FTE)
Retained	252 units	381 persons (204 units)	- 48 units
Non-Uniformed	185	187 <i>Established Post – 173</i> <i>Externally Funded Post – 7</i> <i>Agency staff - 7</i>	+ 2
Fire Control	30.5 <i>(includes 2 x new burdens)</i>	39 (37.5 FTE) <i>(including ISP backfill)</i> <i>Secondments – 2</i>	+8.5

FUTURE OF THE HR DEPARTMENT

2.4 With reference to the review undertaken by PwC (as set out in the previous report dated 24 July 2009), the review was completed in December 2009 and outcomes reported to the full Fire Authority at its meeting on 18 December 2009. A copy of the report presented is attached at Appendix B.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The pending employment tribunal will have financial implications in terms of legal costs. It is unknown as to whether any additional costs will emanate from the claims tabled.
- 3.2 The additional 8.5 posts within Fire Control are receiving funding. 7.5 posts are funded by the Regional New Burdens grant to facilitate the initial staffing pool and 1 post is funded by Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's New Burdens grant.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources and learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no specific aspects in relation to a disproportionate effect in respect of the key equality strands.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

A regular reporting system on the management of HR ensures that the Service and the Authority are aware of any developing issues and are agile enough to react appropriately to mitigate risks of employment tribunals and other claims against the organisation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members endorse the report and note the progress made to date.

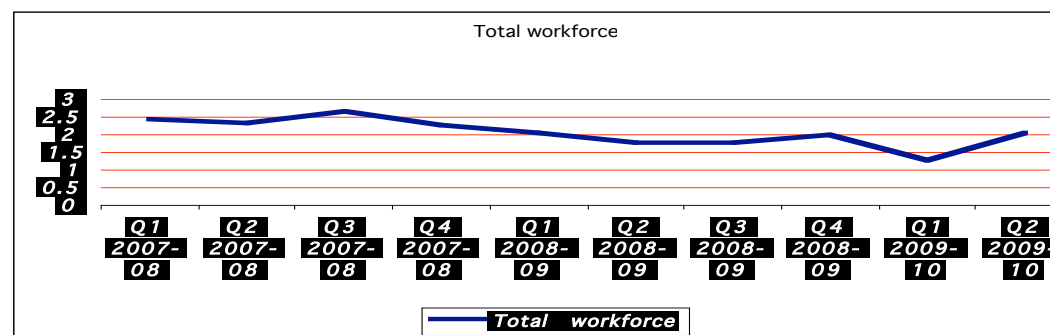
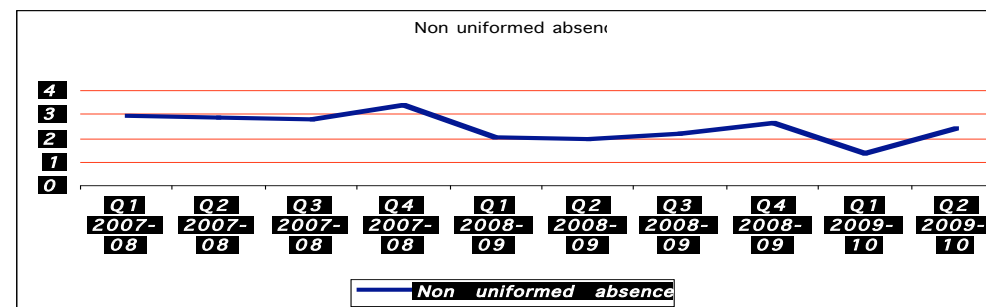
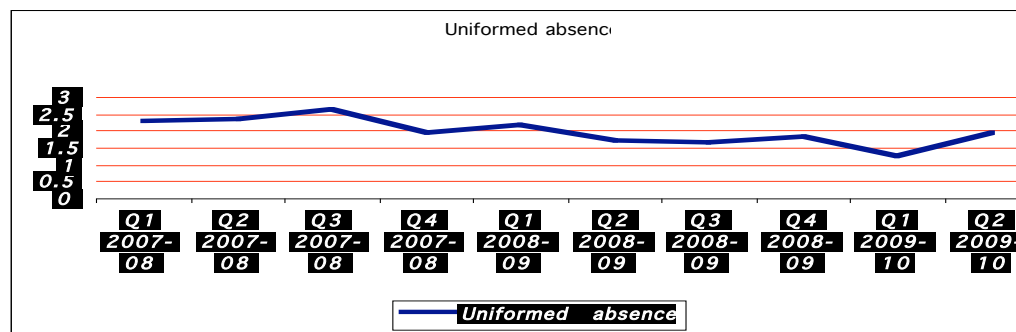
10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

BREAKDOWN OF ABSENCE Q2 (JUL-SEPT 09)

WORK GROUP	Jul-09				Aug-09				Sep-09				SUMMARY OF QUARTER 2			
	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Jul 2008 days lost	% difference	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Aug 2008 days lost	% difference	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Sept 2008 days lost	% difference	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Q2 2008 days lost	% difference
UNIFORMED (inc Control)	0.70	408	354	-15.25	0.72	421	338	-24.56	0.56	328	333	1.50	1.97	1157	1025	-12.88
NON UNIFORMED	0.63	111	140.5	21.00	0.91	161	104	-54.81	0.84	147.5	89.5	-64.80	2.38	419.5	334	-25.60
TOTAL WORKFORCE	0.68	519	494.5	-4.95	0.08	582	442	-31.67	0.62	475.5	422.5	-12.54	2.06	1576.5	1359	-16.00





NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Fire & Rescue Service

Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 18 December 2009

Purpose of Report:

To introduce to Members the findings of the human resources review 'closure' report by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 9 June 2006, the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority received a report relating to the human resource (HR) issues within the change agenda. As a consequence of this report, a HR sub-group inclusive of the Fire Authority and Officer members was constituted to instigate an external review of the HR function. As a consequence of this a review was commissioned and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) was the body tasked with delivering the findings.
- 1.2 The review took place during the early autumn of 2006 and the findings were delivered in November 2006. A report was taken to the Authority in December 2006. In all, the report found significant problems with the HR function within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and recommended the appointment of an interim Head of HR. Additionally there were in excess of twenty specific recommendations relating to structure, policies and procedures, delivery and HR management. As a consequence of the review, an interim Head of HR was appointed and the Service began its response to the implementation of the findings of the review.
- 1.3 The management of NFRS continued to support the review process and reported regularly to the Human Resources Committee of the Fire Authority on progress. A new structure was implemented and the number of issues being faced by the Service improved significantly.
- 1.4 As a consequence of the improvements made, the Human Resources Committee on 24 July 2009, approved the commissioning of PwC to review the progress made by the Service against its action plan. As a consequence, Mr Peter Short of PwC, who had previously worked with the Service, and Mr Stephen Pugh, the Senior Manager of Human Resources Services with PwC, were engaged to undertake the work.

2. REPORT

The outcomes of the review which has taken place over the previous 8-10 weeks is attached at Appendix A to this report. The full detail will be presented by Mr Peter Short and Mr Stephen Pugh at the Authority meeting of 18 December 2009.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost of the review is £7k and has been met from within existing contingencies.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The implications for human resources will be contained within the report from PwC. There are no specific learning and development implications.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An equality impact assessment has identified no specific aspects relating to a disproportionate effect in respect of the key equality strands.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

A correctly functioning HR department and policies are key to the delivery of an effective service. Failure to achieve this can result in a poor performing Service, legal challenge in HR related matters and reputational damage to the Service.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members accept fully the findings of PricewaterhouseCoopers in respect of the human resources update review.

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

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



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High Level Review of an Internal Report of the HR Function

Overview Summary

December 2009

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Executive Summary

In 2006 the Nottinghamshire Combined Fire Authority commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) to undertake a review of the Human Resources (HR) function. This involved PwC in reviewing HR policies and procedures and their application; issues in relation to the management of absence, discipline and grievances; how the function met the needs of its customers; whether the team structure was supporting service delivery and the role of HR team members. PwC delivered its report to the Fire Authority in December 2006. The report contained a series of recommendations which were presented as an action plan.

Reports on progress against the Action Plan, and information relating to levels of absence, discipline and grievance, have been submitted to each meeting of the Human Resources Committee since this time.

In mid 2009, Frank Swann, NFRS Chief Fire Officer asked PwC to undertake a high level review of progress made by the HR Function since the initial report.

It was agreed that the most cost effective way to undertake the review was for NFRS to produce an internal report and for PwC to consider the validity of its contents by interviewing a cross section of Council members, Operational management and HR team members. It was also determined that consideration of relevant documentation should form part of the review.

The review of documentation, structured interviews and also some ad-hoc discussions took place between the beginning of August and the end of October 2009, with subsequent telephone contact and email correspondence, as required, between PwC and NFRS.

All of the information gathered from the three sources outlined above tends to support the conclusions of the internal report. This indicated an HR Function which was well structured and managed and which had experienced considerable improvement since the initial PwC report in December 2006.

Approach

A high level review of an internal report on the HR Function was conducted. The report was read and its content and conclusions were reviewed and considered. (See appendix 1)

Relevant documentation and data identified during a scoping exercise was also reviewed in order to aid validation of the report's contents. (See appendix 1)

A series of structured telephone interviews with key stakeholder groups was conducted, i.e.:

- CFA members/former CFA members x 3
- Senior Managers x 3
- HR team members x 3

(see appendix 2)

Interviewees were asked broadly the same questions, (see appendix 3) although there was a slight variation in the ones put to the HR team members. The questions were aimed at:

- Establishing the interviewees relationship with HR, or role within the HR team
- Identifying the current business context within which the HR Function was operating
- Understanding any changes in HR operation and related impacts since the initial PwC report in December 2006

Whilst on site at NFRS HQ to carry out the document review, a number of brief, ad-hoc discussions were held with some NFRS Managers and the HR team. (see appendix 3) These brief discussions helped in getting a "feel" as to the current people and HR climate within NFRS.

Analysis and conclusions

Internal Report

The internal report referenced the initial PwC report, in particular those areas where potential improvements for HR operations and structures had been identified. The report went on to articulate where improvements had actually been made and indicated documents which would corroborate the changes.

Overall the report appeared to address in sufficient detail its indicated remit.

Structured Interviews

All interviewees appeared to be completely open and frank in their responses to the questions posed. Where there were areas which they were unable to comment on through lack of direct knowledge, they readily indicated as such.

It was clear from the discussions with all interviewees that there had been a marked change in climate within the HR Function since the initial PwC report. The main themes which were articulated generally by all interviewees were:

- The HR team were now clear about individual roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- There was a discipline within the team which manifested itself in directing requests for support and assistance to the right area of expertise, rather than trying to deal with issues when having limited knowledge and resource
- There is consistency and high standard of advice given by the HR Function
- The structure of the HR Function (broadly split along Corporate/Operational/Administrative lines) is much more fit for purpose than it was previously
- There are improved links with operational management and they in turn are taking on board their own responsibilities for people management with improved support and guidance from the HR Function
- People issues are dealt with at a much earlier stage, due to improved working relationships and communication and as a result are able to be dealt with more effectively and expeditiously
- There is more structure and organisation, for example, access to a comprehensive range of HR Policies on an internal intranet and also through planning and review processes
- There were numerous clear references to improved leadership, but also a sense of empowerment within the HR team which has helped to create a much more positive atmosphere
- Relationships with the Trades Unions were indicated as being stable and positive, mainly due to early consultation and involvement in key issues

Whilst all of the above could be termed as positive feedback, there were some comments relating to further improvement, particularly in respect of providing challenge and demonstrating greater confidence when dealing with strong operational management.

Document Review

The range of documents reviewed broadly supported the conclusions of the internal report, particularly those which had “hard” indicators such as absence statistics and Grievance/Disciplinary cases.

Where information required to inform this report was not readily available, clarification was provided either in discussion, or through the production of additional documentation and subsequent email correspondence.

Some of the documentation would have benefited by having additional information, for example, indicating status reports on policy review, or trend analyses for example. In addition various reports may also benefit through having a more consistent format. (These observations were discussed with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and taken on board at the time of the review)

Other meetings and discussions

Whilst on site at the Bestwood HQ a number of ad-hoc discussions and meetings were held with several NFRS members of staff as indicated in Appendix 4.

Whilst these discussions were not structured, or planned as part of this report, they did help in demonstrating “feel” of HR Operation and outputs and also people issues in general within NFRS.

The overall impression was very positive and appeared to indicate an organisation which understood the key people issues and the roles they had to play in dealing with them.

Conclusions

All of the information gathered from the three sources outlined above tends to support the conclusions of the internal report. This indicated an HR Function which was well structured and managed and which had seen considerable improvement since the initial PwC report in December 2006.

It would also appear that this has contributed in relation to a beneficial impact on people issues in general within NFRS.

This review of the internal report can only be described as high level (although over ten hours was devoted to interviewing and speaking with key individuals). However, the fact that information was gathered from a number of sources, added to previous PwC knowledge of the organisation would appear to give weight and confidence to the conclusions.

Next steps

Following the delivery of this overview report to Frank Swann, Chief Fire Officer (Designate), it will be presented to a meeting of the Nottinghamshire Combined Fire Authority on 18th December 2009.

Appendix 1 – Documents reviewed

NFRS Internal Report - “An evaluation of the implementation of the review of the Human Resources function by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)”

HR Committee report (September 2008)

HR Structure chart (September 2008)

HR team Job descriptions/Person specifications (June 2008)

List of current HR policies and procedures (2008 onwards)

Grievance monitoring form (October 2007)

Discipline monitoring form (October 2007)

PDR policy (March 2009)

JNCP minutes (March 2009)

Monitoring information (March 2009)

Managing Sickness Absence policy (issued November 2007, reviewed June 2008)

Report to Performance Monitoring Committee (June 2009).

Draft ill health retirement process map (April 2009)

Evaluation report to SMT - use of Firstcare (February 2009)

Firstcare commercial agreement (November 2008)

Establishment of Attendance Team (September 2008)

Equality Impact Assessment toolkit (January 2009)

Copy of policy/report template

Single Equality Scheme - “Equal life chances for all” (2009-2013)

Business Plan (2009/10)

Workforce Plan (2009/11)

HR Strategy review – report to HR Committee (March 2009)

NFRS Annual Report (2008/2009)

Appendix 2 – Persons Interviewed

Councillor Darrell Pulk, Chair of the Fire Authority

Councillor John Cottee, former Fire Authority Lead Opposition Spokesperson

Pat Lally, former Councillor and Chair of the Fire Authority Human Resources Committee

Andy Beale, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

John Buckley, Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Head of Community Risk Response

Sean Whelan, Area Manager Corporate Services

Tracy Crump, HR Manager (Corporate)

Alison Cordon, HR Services Officer

Aileen McPherson, HR Business Partner

Appendix 3 – Structured Interview Questions

Manager and Member Interviews

Which HR services do you interact with most, e.g. Recruitment/Training delivery/Case Management/HR advice / Management Development / Management Information, Statistics, Introducing and developing strategy etc and how often?

What are the key business factors and issues currently facing NFRS as an organisation?

What are the people implications of these?

How would you describe the HR service provided to NFRS managers and staff in your Committee/Area/Team?

How could the provision of HR services change/improve to add more value in the future?

How would you say that the HR Function and its Service has changed over the past 2-3 years?

- The way it is structured
- The way in which individual/team/support skills and knowledge are utilised and deployed
- Planning and strategy

Can you give some examples to illustrate this?

In relation to People issues within NFRS how would you say that the following has changed over the last 2-3 years?

- Development and implementation of Policies and Procedures
- Management of Disciplinary and Grievance issues
- Management of sickness absence issues
- Management of ill health issues
- Application of the Personal Development Review Process
- Application of Equality Impact assessments
- Formal and Informal relationships with Trades Unions

Can you give some examples to illustrate your thoughts?

Any other comments?

HR team Interviews

Which HR services do you manage, help deliver most, e.g. Recruitment/Training delivery/Case Management/HR advice / Management Development / Management Information, Statistics, Introducing and developing strategy etc.

What are the key business factors and issues currently facing NFRS as an organisation?

What are the people implications of these?

How could the provision of HR services change/improve to add more value in the future?

How would you say that the HR Function and its Service has changed over the past 2-3 years, with particular reference to the following aspects?

- The way it is structured
- The way in which individual/team/support skills and knowledge are utilised and deployed
- Planning and strategy

Can you give some examples to illustrate your thoughts?

In relation to People issues within how would you say that the following has changed over the last 2-3 years?

- Development and implementation of Policies and Procedures
- Management of Disciplinary and Grievance issues
- Management of sickness absence issues
- Management of illness issues
- Application of the Personal Development Review Process
- Application of Equality Impact assessments

Formal and Informal relationships with Trades Unions

Can you give some examples to illustrate your thoughts?

Any other comments?

Appendix 4– Other Meetings and discussions

Andy Beale Deputy Chief Fire Officer

John Buckley Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Head of Community Risk Response

Dave Horton Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Head of Community Risk Reduction

Neil Timms Assistant Chief Officer/Head of Finance & Resources

Alison Cordon HR Services Officer

Ruth Dobson HR Administrator.

Rachel Rodda, HR Administrator.

NB some of the discussions above were in addition to structured interviews previously conducted with certain individuals.