



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

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of meeting held on **21 OCTOBER 2011** at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Bestwood Lodge, from 10.00 am to 11.08 am.

Membership

Councillor Smith (Chair)
Councillor Cooper
^ Councillor Cross
Councillor Girling
Councillor Morris

Members absent are marked ^

Present as observers – Councillor Grocock and Councillor Wheeler.

13 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Cross.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

15 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 July 2011, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed, and signed by the Chair.

16 UPDATE ON POTENTIAL STRIKE ACTION

With the consent of the Chair, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated the meeting on the potential for industrial action by employees on 30 November 2011 in relation to the proposed reform of public sector pensions. At the time of the meeting it appeared that only

employees who belonged to Unison would be affected. Unison was currently balloting its members on whether or not to take industrial action on 30 November. The Business Continuity Management Team were monitoring the situation should the decision be in favour of strike action.

17 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Fire Officer, copies of which had been circulated, updating the Committee on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy 2010-13. Progress in the following areas was highlighted:

- employee relations and engagement:
 - the Service continued to place a high priority on effective communication with the workforce and representative bodies. Consultation on the Fire Cover Review incorporated feedback from the trade unions and gave the opportunity to all employees to contribute their views;
 - the Service would be undertaking an employee survey during 2012 to establish employees' views on a range of issues;
 - the Service had invested in the training of six accredited Workplace Mediators to support the development of a formal mediation process to deal with problems between individuals, with a view to reducing the number of formal grievances and improving working relationships;
- health and safety risk management – fire risk assessments for all of the properties comprised in the Nottingham Fire and Rescue Services estate had been completed and the findings incorporated into the planned maintenance programmes;
- employee pay and benefits - negotiations were underway at a national level for the financial year 2012-13, following a period of pay restraint over the last two years. An equal pay audit was concluded during 2011 and reported no significant gender disparities. The Service was currently in consultation on a job evaluation process for uniformed roles which would further reduce the potential for equal pay claims;
- resources and planning - the Workforce Plan 2011-13 identified the projected changes to the workforce arising from anticipated turnover and the likely impacts of the Fire Cover Review and budgetary reductions and set out an action plan to manage human resources (HR) related issues identified in the Plan. The management of the establishment to meet required budgetary reductions was a priority for the Service;
- equality, diversity and culture - the Service was committed to achieving the Excellent standard of the equality framework by 2013. A culture was being embedded whereby diversity and equal access to services and employment were fundamental to all policy decisions and service delivery models;
- training and personal development - the Service had completed its maintenance of competence programme to ensure that all operational personnel could demonstrate evidence of skills and knowledge required to operate competently in role. Consultation was underway on changes to the way in which the Service developed its

potential Supervisory and Middle Managers, with the emphasis on developing key incident command and core skills prior to promotion. The Performance and Development scheme was currently under review and the LearnPro e-learning platform was now available to all employees via the intranet;

- occupational health and fitness - a consistent level of aerobic fitness across the operational workforce had been introduced via the Fitness Policy. Following consultation with representative bodies, the Substance Misuse Policy was being applied which involved random screening for drugs and alcohol. It was not intended to be punitive but to reduce risk to the Service;
- developing the capacity and value of the HR function - the role of HR Business Partners had become embedded with greater involvement in district management teams and at local levels. This ensured that key messages and information about new policies and procedures were conveyed more effectively across the organisation and HR issues were dealt with at a much earlier stage.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

18 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Fire Officer, copies of which had been circulated, updating the Committee on human resources issues within the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service.

The sickness absence figures for quarter 1 (1 April 2011 – 30 June 2011) were down, with 945 days having been lost due to sickness, compared to 1328.5 days in the previous quarter. The cumulative average over the last 12 months was 5.68 days per employee. The target absence was 6.5 days per employee.

A robust absence management policy was in place to monitor absence continuously, especially long term sickness, where early intervention was important.

In the period 1 July 2011 – 30 September 2011 there had been four grievances, and two disciplinaries.

During the period 1 July 2011 – 30 September 2011, no-one had commenced employment with the Fire and Rescue Service and 17 employees left the Service. There were a number of vacancies across the establishment, most notably within the whole-time workforce. The situation was being actively managed and monitored.

RESOLVED that the report be endorsed.

19 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the public be excluded 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

20 REGRAIDING OF POSTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Fire Officer, copies of which had been circulated, notifying the Committee of applications considered by, and outcomes of, the Job Evaluation Panel in respect of changes to the permanent non-uniformed establishment, during the period July to September 2011 (inclusive)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.