



**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 12 June 2015 from 10.00am - 11.52am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Mike Pringle

Absent

Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Gail Turner
Councillor Liz Yates

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Substitute for Councillor Michael Payne)
Councillor Chris Barnfather (Substitute for Councillor Liz Yates)

Councillor Brian Grocock in attendance as an observer.

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

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|-----------------------|---|
| Craig Parkin | - Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| Tracy Crump | - Head of Human Resources Services |
| Gail Armitage | - Occupational Health and Fitness Manager |
| Bridget Aherne | - Head of Corporate Communications |
| Catherine Ziane-Pryor | - Governance Officer |

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

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

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Michael Payne (Other Council Business) Councillor Pulk substituting
Councillor Liz Yates (Other Council Business), Councillor Chris Barnfather substituting,
Councillor Gail Turner

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were declared during this item, however, during consideration of item 9, Reorganisation of the Hydrant Maintenance and Equipment

Sections (minute 9), Councillor Chris Barnfather declared a non-prejudicial interest insofar as he is a Director of the Trading Company 'Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (Trading) Ltd' which is referred to in the report. This did not preclude him from considering the item.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2015 were confirmed and signed by the presiding Chair.

5 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates members on the key human resources metrics for the period October 2014 to April 2015.

The following points were highlighted from the report:

- (a) there was a slight increase by 73 days in respect of absence in Quarter 4, compared to Quarter 3;
- (b) the average absence target is set at 1.56 days per quarter but the average absence for the period was 2.2 days per employee;
- (c) the overall absence in 2014/15 was an average of 8.25 days per employee;
- (d) a small number of significant long-term medical conditions, which are covered by medical certificates, accounted for 78% of absences;
- (e) Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service nationally ranks midpoint on sickness rates with other Fire and Rescue Authorities whilst also showing a similar general trend in absence due to musculo skeletal issues, along with mental health issues;
- (f) support is provided to employees during their sickness such as physiotherapy, the support of fitness advisers and rehabilitation programmes. In addition the Westfield Health Scheme provides access to specialist appointments and diagnostics;
- (g) Firefighting is a very physical job and, as with other physically demanding careers, results in wear and tear on the body. During 2015 the Service will introduce a six month pilot scheme which will screen employees to try and identify the early indicators of musculo skeletal conditions at an early stage and provide advice on how to prevent health issues developing;
- (h) the Occupational Health Team provide self-referral or managerial referral for support and treatment of mental health issues, including post incident support. A new pilot scheme providing peer support is being developed to enable staff to informally seek help and advice;
- (i) it must be recognised that not all mental health issues are directly the effect of or influenced by work, but that the service support recovery;

- (j) following a significant absence from work and assessment of the individual, modified duties can be arranged, including phased return and specific equipment, to help ease people back into the role;
- (k) longer term prevention issues are also being considered with regard to handling procedures and the weight of equipment;
- (l) the proportion of ill-health retirements has reduced in recent years since the changes to employment conditions;
- (m) the Occupational Health Team are trying to encourage staff to seek support at an early stage for any potential health issue, as many conditions can be successfully treated, or at least supported, if caught at an early stage;
- (n) work based physical training instructors are in place and will be asked to concentrate on developing the fitness and well-being of firefighters rather than purely strength.

Although disappointed that the sickness absence rate was above the target, members welcomed the clear and transparent report and acknowledged the proactive mechanisms being developed to not only tackle sickness absence but to prevent it.

RESOLVED to note the report.

6 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS WELLBEING STRATEGY

Tracey Crump, Head of Human Resources Services, presented the report which informs members of activity and outlines the proposed delivery from 2015 of the Occupational Health and Fitness Strategy. Gail Armitage, Occupational Health and Fitness Manager, was also in attendance to respond to members questions.

The following points were highlighted from the report and during the meeting:

- (a) in addition to undertaking pre-employment checks, the Occupational Health Team provides regular medicals and supports and advises staff on keeping fit and maintaining well-being;
- (b) originally medicals were undertaken every three years, however, following asbestos legislation, firefighters were to undergo medicals every two years. Advice on asbestos screening/medicals has since changed to suggest three yearly medicals are sufficient, however, the Service has decided to continue with medicals every two years;
- (c) there have been several changes to the focus of medicals with less importance placed on strength testing, and more importance placed on fitness, particularly with an ageing workforce;
- (d) the Occupational Health Team have been working closely with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service on critical incident support. From September training will be rolled out to managers to enable them to recognise the problems that may occur following a critical incident and to help prevent them from developing;

- (e) a general health questionnaire will be issued to all staff who are encouraged to consider their own health and potential issues. It provides the opportunity for staff to raise informally what they may consider to be insignificant health issues, without a formal approach to the Occupational Health Team who can then offer advice and guidance and potentially help prevent minor health issues becoming a larger problem;
- (f) resilience workshops have been well received and will now be rolled out across the Service, including specific sessions for managers;
- (g) with regard to dust hazard, when attending a scene, firefighters will assess the risk and wherever possible take measures to neutralise those risks. Where dust is concerned, this may include damping down the surrounding area or using specialist breathing equipment. As with all personal safety equipment, if a standard face mask does not provide the required seal and therefore is unsuitable, bespoke equipment is provided.

RESOLVED for members to support the Occupational Health activities and strategy identified within the report.

7 FUTURE MEETING DATES

Resolved for the following future meeting dates to be noted:

**17 July 2015
16 October 2015
22 January 2016
22 April 2016**

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda 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 exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in paragraphs 1 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

9 AMENDMENTS TO THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks approval for the recommendations to amend the permanent establishment, to be forwarded to the full Fire Authority for final approval.

RESOLVED that the recommendations within the report are approved.

10 RE-ORGANISATION OF THE HYDRANT MAINTENANCE AND EQUIPMENT SECTIONS

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report, which seeks approval for the recommendations for reorganisation of the Hydrant Maintenance and Equipment Sections to be forwarded to the full Fire Authority for final approval.

RESOLVED that the recommendations within the report and added to at the meeting are approved.

11 ADMINISTRATION RESTRUCTURE

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks approval for the recommendations of a restructure to Administration, to be forwarded to the full Fire Authority for final approval.

RESOLVED that the recommendations within the report and added to at the meeting are approved.

12 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TEAM RE-STRUCTURE

Following recommendations by the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2015, Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks approval for the recommendations to the restructure of the Strategic Management Team to be forwarded to the full Fire Authority for final approval.

RESOLVED that the recommendations within the report are approved.