



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 4 May 2018 from 10.01am - 11.31am

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Jackie Morris

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Wayne Bowcock	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development
Matt Sismey	- Equality and Diversity Officer
Thomas Briggs	- Equality Development Officer
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2018 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

27 RESTRUCTURE OF HOME SAFETY CHECK OPERATIVE ROLES

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks the disestablishment of two vacant Grade 1 Home Safety Check Operative roles and the creation

of a Grade 3 Specialist Home Safety Operative (SHSO) position within the Prevention department to more effectively meet the requirements of the Service.

With increased collaborative work and sharing of specialist demographic information to enable targeted preventative work of more vulnerable members of the community, the demand on SHSO's has increased. As all whole-time operational staff are now able to undertake 'Welfare Checks', it would be more efficient and effective to replace the two vacant posts with a SHSO post at a potential saving of £16k per annum.

Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal to improve the service and make savings but requested that the situation is monitored and reported back.

RESOLVED

- (1) to disestablish the two vacant Grade 1 Home Safety Check Operative roles;**
- (2) to create an additional Grade 3 Specialist Home Safety Operative role;**
- (3) for the situation to be monitored and reported to members within the 'Safe and Well' report.**

28 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the update report which provides information on sickness absence rates, discipline and grievances, and staffing numbers during the last year quarter and the year overall, including specifics for wholetime and control and non-uniformed staff.

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to Councillor's questions;

- (a) absence has reduced in the last quarter compared to the previous quarter and against the same period last year but, overall, absence has increased by 2.2% compared to 2016-17, resulting in an average of 8.05 days per employee in the past year, against a target of 6.25 days;
- (b) the majority of sickness is long-term and is supported by the Occupational Health Team, including return to work assessments and reasonable adjustments to assist employees back to work and to remain at work;
- (c) whilst whole-time, non-uniformed and fire control staffing numbers either meet or are near approved levels, there are vacancies for 53 retained units of cover, and recruitment is ongoing to vacant positions;
- (d) with regard to succession planning, whole-time recruitment is already underway and will run alongside the ongoing retained recruitment. It takes six months to recruit and between 18 months to 2 years to fully train firefighters. The cost of training firefighters was calculated several years ago at approximately £30,000. After initial training has been passed firefighters are then placed on stations where they will undergo elements of practical training 'on the job';

- (e) the failure rate in training of new firefighter applicants varies due to their individual circumstances but is considered low. With regard to firefighters leaving the Service there is a faster rate of turnover for retained duty staff, often due to the demands of their other work and influences from outside the Service. Whole time firefighters have made a concerted career choice and so dropout and leaving rates are much lower;
- (f) recruitment work, including career preparation, is undertaken at every possible opportunity by fire teams at schools, universities, colleges and Council job fairs and recruitment events, where the Fire Service is always a welcome presence;
- (g) unlike the Police Service, the Fire Service does not offer a fast track route for progression through the ranks although the 'High Potential Leadership Programme' did operate for a couple of years. The 'Aspiring Leaders' system is now in place but while offering development, it does not offer career acceleration.

Members of the Committee welcomed the reduction in sickness levels in the final quarter.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) for the following to be presented to a future meeting of the committee:**
 - (a) an up to date cost of the recruitment and training of a firefighter;**
 - (b) the failure/dropout rates of newly recruited firefighters during the training period.**

29 EQUAL PAY REVIEW AND GENDER PAY GAP AUDIT

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the report on the findings of the equal pay review, which takes place every three years, along with the newly required gender pay gap audit which is required to be undertaken annually.

An independent assessment was undertaken on the pay data as of 31 March 2017, considering specific areas as outlined in the report and included gender, age, race, bonuses and different pay groups.

Whilst overall the Service average difference in pay between men and women is 20%, and the median 11.9%, it is noted that pay rates are agreed at a national level for the majority of roles within the Service, and whilst men and women are not paid differently for the same role, 83.6% of the workforce are male and 16.84% of female, with a higher proportion of men undertaking higher grade operational roles. In addition, the nature of the retained duty system also disproportionately impacts on the overall results.

It was not unexpected that there are more men in higher management roles than women within the Service and it is noted that the Service is actively trying to recruit more women, particularly to operational roles, and for more women to apply for promotion.

In terms of the equal pay review, recommendations regarding an overlap in support grades which will be looked at when the national changes to pay structure are implemented. Although

there will be an impact on the Service, it will not be as significant as that on local authorities as the service does not currently have any Grade 1 level (National living wage) employees.

Committee member's questions responded to as follows:

- (a) of the 250 current retained firefighters, there are 11 retained women. Recruitment and retention of women in this role is difficult, partly as the contract for employment is set nationally at either 120 or 84 hours per week and is not attractive to women with caring responsibilities for children and relatives. There is potential to vary the contract at a local level and offer fewer hours (which can be worked around caring responsibilities) but this will need to be negotiated with unions once the current ongoing negotiations have concluded;
- (b) due to the reduction in the establishment, and overall the relatively low turnover of whole time staff (it's been 6 years since the last time whole-time recruitment drive) it will take some significant time for changes to the workforce gender profile to alter.

RESOLVED to note the report.

30 EQUALITIES MONITORING REPORT

Matt Sismey, Equality and Diversity Officer, presented the report which updates the Committee on the breakdown of the workforce by protected characteristic during the calendar year 2017 and the work being done by the Service to improve diversity.

The following points were highlighted and responses given to members questions:

- (a) There has been little change in percentages since 2016 but workforce numbers have reduced, as per the breakdown below. It is noted that nationally female firefighters are expected to make up 5% of all firefighters, so the 4.56% achieved in 2017 is good but there was still work to be done;

	2016	2017
Total employees	923	895
Female (of all firefighters)	3.97% (29 of 730 posts)	4.56% (32 of 701 posts)
Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME)	3.25% (30)	3.35% (30)
Lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)	1.52% (14)	1.55% (14)
Disabled	4.33% (40)	4.65% (39)

- (b) Stonewall figures expect 5 - 7% of staff to be LGB, and 10-12% of the population have a disability. However, to undertake the firefighter role, staff need to be strong and fit so it is reasonable to expect disability to be lower in the operational workforce, but disability amongst the non-uniform staff is generally much higher;

- (c) for pay Grades 1 to 7 there is a minimal gap between the numbers of men and women, but the gap widens with fewer women at Grade 8 and above. However it is a concern that there are no BAME members of staff operating at Grade 8 and above. This is something which the organisation needs to look into;
- (d) with regard to recruitment, the numbers of successful female applicants is similar to the number of male applicants, and 18% of all applications were BAME, which is a positive response. Recruitment of people with disabilities is targeted through the 'even break' scheme, with the option of opting into the guaranteed interview scheme;
- (e) for retained recruitment, 2 of the 13 women applicants were successful, one of whom is BAME, which equates to the 7% which is the ethnic mix within the county;
- (f) whole-time recruitment has been very active with engagement at a range of festivals and events throughout the year. The application process for whole-time Fire-fighters opened on 5 March 2018. Positive action recruitment events have been undertaken from last summer with applicants receiving support to prepare for the selection process. This has included mentoring on the role requirements, including attitude and physical and mental health. One female firefighter has been running gym sessions with female candidates at weekends to help improve fitness levels in preparation for the physical assessments;
- (g) the Service does not apply psychometric testing to gauge stress tolerances, but it is made very clear to candidates what to expect whilst undertaking the job and the reality that it may include some stressful and disturbing experiences. It is better for all parties if candidates realise if the job is not for them at an early stage of assessment.

Members of the Committee are encouraged by the progress to date in improving diversity and the positive recruitment activity.

A revised appendix will be circulated with the initial issue of the minutes.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report and support the Service's continued commitment to attracting, recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce.

31 UPDATE ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the six monthly update of the People Strategy (initiated by the Service prior to national activity) which aligns to the Service's Organisational Development and Inclusion Strategy and the Service Transformation and Improvement Programme.

A key focus for the people strategy includes:

- delivering our service;
- shaping workforce;
- outstanding leadership;
- workforce development;
- workforce engagement;
- positive workplace and culture;
- inclusion.

Points highlighted and responses to Councillor's questions included:

- (a) with regard to 'delivering our service', recruitment is under way and it is anticipated that successful candidates could start training during September 2018;
- (b) negotiations had taken place with the unions regarding the new rostering arrangement and this week a collective agreement was signed. It is acknowledged that reaching this point had involved a huge amount of work for colleagues and union representatives but the agreement does now specify the correct number of staff per appliance. The agreement came into effect on 1 May 2018 but it is predicted that it will take several months to fully embed with a temporary spike in overtime anticipated;
- (c) home safety checks will be rebranded as 'safe and well' activity which includes providing information and advice on behalf of partners to help support vulnerable people to continue living safely in their own home and provides a valuable opportunity to promote home safety and reduce fires and accidents. It is anticipated that the revised scheme will be launched at the beginning of June 2018;
- (d) the recently agreed mixed crewing model involves engaging more retained duty firefighters for quieter periods of activity, such as overnight, whilst stations are staffed by wholetime firefighters at the busier times, which are usually during the day. Transition to the mixed crewing model will be complicated and in recognition of the fact that staff will need support and time to adjust, the Service is working with the FBU to ensure the best possible transition for employees. There have been no redundancies, and if an individual doesn't want to work a day shift at a transitioned station, they can ask to transfer to work at another station. It is predicted that the first station will be wholly operating the new model by September /October 2018;
- (e) with regard to voluntary secondary arrangements (VSA), the Service is offering an opportunity to operational staff who wish to register to work additional hours at single time pay, for instance to provide retained cover or support the 'safe and well' work in the community. Due to some objections by the FBU, initial uptake is not predicted to be strong at this stage;
- (f) the 'Aspirational Leadership' programme was advertised in December and 31 staff are now participating. Additionally, 8 employees have enrolled on an Apprenticeship Level 5 Leadership programme via Sheffield College;
- (g) e-learning has increased at all levels and roles, and is easier to access and more convenient for staff than traditional classroom training. With e-learning of theory topics prior to courses, the length of attendance on some training courses can be reduced;
- (h) coaching and mentoring is important for personal development and the Service now has 22 coaches operating;
- (i) with regard to collaboration, consideration is being given as to how training can be shared with not only other Fire Services, but also the Police. Operationally there are very few common areas between the Police and Fire Services, but there is potential to share some elements of managerial training;

- (j) the last of the Spring conferences was held recently. 180 staff attended the events. Members of the Authority will be invited to attend future conferences;
- (k) the proportion of completed staff surveys has increased from 40% last time to 55% this year. In addition, there has been a female only survey. The staff survey is run by an independent external organisation which will now collate the findings which will be reported back to the Committee;
- (l) following a tender exercise, BUPA , and the 'Life and Progress' employee assistance programme has replaced the previous employee support scheme. An on-site Physiotherapy service operates one day a week from Headquarters to support employees with musculo-skeletal conditions..

Members of the Committee welcomed the signing of the collective agreement, commended all parties on the hard work undertaken to reach an agreement and requested that a formal letter from the Committee saying such should be sent to those involved.

Committee members requested that if staff were happy for and wanted members of the Authority to attend staff conferences, members welcomed the opportunity but needed to be made aware of the schedules well in advance.

The Chair welcomed the update and commended the report as clear and thorough.

RESOLVED to note the report.