



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

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ,  
Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on 18 October 2019 from  
10:00am to 11:21am**

**Membership**

<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos (Chair)	None
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell	
Councillor Jawaid Khalil	
Councillor John Longdon	
Councillor Salma Mumtaz	

**Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer
Craig Parkin	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer

**9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**10 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

**11 MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

**12 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the key Human Resources metrics for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2019. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the current absence reporting period is 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019. The absence rates across the workforce, excluding On-Call employees, increased over the period by 245 days (19.3%), which represents an increase compared to the same quarter of the previous year of 344 days (29.4%). Long-term absence (more than 28 days) constitutes 67.6% of the total absence during the period so, although fewer people have been off sick overall, the long-term absences have resulted in more shifts being lost than in the previous quarter. Nationally, the Service ranked 24th of 30 in terms of sickness days per employee for the period, and it was above the sector sickness average of 2.15 days per employee. Steps have been taken to explore the reasons behind this usually high period of sickness and to improve the situation, and sickness absence is now falling again;
- (b) most long-term absences are due to musculoskeletal and mental health conditions. When a member of staff first reports sickness absence, information is made available to them on the full range of support available if needed, including referral to the in-house Occupational Health team. Independent, confidential support is also available to cover a wide range of employee issues in both work and home life. The employee assistance programme means that staff can be referred to an appropriate care scheme through Occupational Health, or be put in touch with other specialist support that they might need. Each case is considered on its own merits to achieve the balance of supporting staff, while giving employees sufficient space to seek support when they are ready;
- (c) letters can be sent to members of staff to thank them for long periods of service without sickness absence. However, the Service exercises a fine balance, so as not to encourage staff to work when they are sick and need rest;
- (d) managers are able to complete stress risk assessments, though not all stress exhibited by staff is due to their work life. Work-related physical injuries are monitored closely, as they can also lead to mental health conditions in some cases. There are different support requirements for uniform and support staff, who are made up of different demographics of people and have very different working environments, so this is taken into account by managers;
- (e) managers look for patterns in leave and sickness absence to help inform their actions, as their primary concern is employee health. It does not appear that staff often take annual leave to mask a sickness absence. Staff can self-refer to Occupational Health and are not obliged to specify reasons for sickness for periods not requiring a doctor's note, but they may be referred to Occupational Health for a confidential discussion if they are off regularly for unspecified reasons. On returning from a longer period of sickness, managers will carry out return to work interviews, to make sure that the right support processes are in place;
- (f) there are three staff in the Occupational Health team, with a doctor who visits through a contract arrangement. Although the team are based at headquarters, they visit stations, teams and on-call stations to raise awareness of how staff can engage with them. There are workforce physical trainers and physiotherapist support is also available, and there is also staff access to support services from the Fire Fighters Charity;

- (g) the Service continues to develop its inclusion and culture change (including initiatives to create more openness about mental health), and disciplinary and grievance figures for the period are very low. Contacts are available to staff who want to seek confidential support, and tools such as the 'Resilient Me' app have been produced. The recent inspection of the Service concluded that good measures for employee health and wellbeing were in place, but an overall strategy document is needed to draw all of the strands together;
- (h) there have been recent changes to the staffing establishment, with the reduction of Control Staff through collaboration with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service on the Joint Control Centre. Work will continue to try to recruit more On-Call staff, where shortages are a national issue. In total, 23 staff have left (8 Whole-Time, 4 On-Call, 10 Support and 1 Dual Contractor) and 21 have started in the period, resulting in an actual workforce figure of 865;
- (i) work has been carried out to address the targets for improvement set out by the recent inspection of the Service, in the areas of staff support, training, leadership development and the embedding of organisational values through people strategies, policies and procedures. A training plan is in place to support the workforce plan, and measures have been taken to better address accurate recording. Communications will be reviewed to enhance staff's understanding of positive action;
- (j) the personal development process is being reviewed to better link this to the departmental and strategic plans. Progression procedures have also been reviewed, and it is made clear that all appointment processes are inclusive, fair and equitable. Briefing sessions are held with staff to explain fully how the internal promotion system operates. Leadership development pathways and talent-spotting processes are in place, but any formal high-potential development scheme would need to be developed on a wider scale than a single service. However, a voluntary Aspiring Leadership Programme has been in place for three years, with learning modules, coaching and strength profiling, and it is intend to develop a further 'Aspiring Station Manager' initiative;
- (k) these new initiatives are vital in taking positive action to address representative imbalances in the workforce by targeting under-represented groups and building confidence. There is an increasing number of women and ethnic minority fire fighter trainees, which will help to develop culture change as they move through the organisation, and it is hoped that the Service will be able to continue to recruit over the next few years;
- (l) the Committee recommended that, although a formal Equality Impact Assessment was not required in support of the current report's recommendations, the standard text of the 'Equalities Implications' section of future reports could be worded slightly differently, to reflect the ongoing work in the Service to improve equality and representation within the workforce.

The Committee noted the report.

### **13 WORKFORCE PLAN 2019-21**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the review of the Workforce Plan for 2018-19 and the updated plan for 2019-21. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the plan looks two years ahead to identify potential impacts on the workforce and associated planning decisions, and is reviewed on an annual basis. Although the staffing establishment figure has now decreased, the reduction will be achieved gradually through natural turnover;
- (b) the final cohort of fire fighter recruits from the latest recruitment process are now in training. Fire fighter recruitment is likely to resume in 2021, with positive action and engagement in preparation for this starting in 2020. Focused work continues to increase the pool of On-Call fire fighters, with recruitment and retention a national, ongoing issue;
- (c) there will be a number of retirements at supervisory level over the next two years, with the potential retirement of 15 Crew and Watch Managers needed before April 2021. This will be addressed through in-house progression and development programmes, and external in-role transfers. The raising of the normal retirement age and pension scheme changes will result in an increasing age profile for the workforce. The potential impacts of this will be considered to inform measures on planning for future issues, including the implications for occupational health and fitness, equipment and training;
- (d) increasing collaboration will have an impact on the workforce, and this includes the now-established Joint Control Centre with the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and the project to move the Service into a joint headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police at the end of 2021;
- (e) the need to make the workforce more representative and diverse is a continuing priority for the Service, with the aim of improving the current workforce profile to better reflect the local population, recognising the limited recruitment opportunities in recent years. Targeted positive action measures will continue to be used, and the Service will also use service delivery activities as opportunities to engage with local communities about a career with the Fire Service, and to promote the Service more widely;
- (f) the Committee acknowledged the extremely positive work that has resulted in the increase of female and ethnic minority employees in operational roles, and the fact that the Authority was shortlisted for a national diversity award.

The Committee noted the report.

### **14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1 and 3, on the basis that, having**

**regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

**15 EXEMPT MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

**16 REGRADING OF POSTS**

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the outcomes arising from the job evaluation process for two non-uniformed roles.

The Committee noted the report.