



## **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 24 January 2020 from  
10:03am to 11:34am**

### **Membership**

#### **Present**

Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos (Chair)  
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell  
Councillor Jawaid Khalil  
Councillor John Longdon  
Councillor Salma Mumtaz

#### **Absent**

None

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

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

### **17 Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **18 Declarations of Interests**

None.

### **19 Minutes**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

### **20 Permanent Change to Establishment: i-Trent Development Support Role**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the proposed creation of an additional i-Trent technical support role, to provide resilience for the i-Trent support team. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the i-Trent Human Resources (HR) database was introduced in 2014. The system is developed and supported by a dedicated i-Trent team, with technical input from ICT. In addition to holding employee and post information, the system supports the administration and reporting of training, payroll, absence management and establishment management. Employees have access to an employee portal that enables them to review their personal details, book leave and register for training courses. The i-Trent system interfaces with many internal databases, including the mobilising system. Developments over the next year include Payroll Phase 2 (expense management), time recording, employee development and Performance Review, and all of these require i-Trent support;
- (b) the current i-Trent support team consists of a part-time HR Systems Officer, a part-time System Administrator and a Systems/Absence Administrator, who commits up to 18.5 hours to i-Trent support. The demands on the i-Trent team since its introduction have increased significantly due to internal requests for system enhancements, the increasing complexity of reporting arrangements/data analysis to support the performance management system and external inspection requirements, and the need for i-Trent to interface and transfer information with other internal systems. Additionally, there is an ongoing requirement to implement system upgrades so that the system can operate at its optimum level;
- (c) to achieve the required capacity, and to enable the Systems Officer to focus more on strategic issues, the creation of a new Grade 4 technical Development Support role is proposed. The original funding for the i-Trent support team was based on a full-time Systems Officer role and a 30-hour Systems Administrator role. However, the current post-holders have since reduced their hours. As such, the funding for the role will be covered largely by the under-spend from the existing salary budget.

**Resolved to recommend the establishment of a full-time i-Trent Development Support post to the Fire Authority.**

**21 Amendments to Maternity Provisions**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the proposed amendments to the current occupational maternity and adoption provisions. The proposed changes relate to maternity leave only, as provision is made for paternity and shared parental leave under different policies. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the current maternity provisions are based upon the public sector national agreements set out for operational and support employees, which enhance the statutory regulations. Additionally, local enhancements are set out within the Service's Maternity Policy and Procedure, which apply to all employees. The National Fire Chiefs' Council has circulated a new best practice document, which has consolidated practice across all English Fire and Rescue Services. Although this is a guidance document, all Services have been encouraged to review their own practice against the guidance;
- (b) the Service's existing provisions are, largely, in line with the guidance documents. The layout and wording of the existing policies has been changed to reflect the

template in the guidance document more closely, to provide more clarity and make it easier to follow. However, some recommendations are not covered in the Service's maternity provisions currently, in areas such as premature births; miscarriage, termination or still birth before 24 weeks; parental bereavement leave; surrogacy; and fertility treatment;

- (c) the proposed changes to the policy do not represent a significant additional cost in themselves, but they do extend current leave arrangements, which will have salary cost implications. The most significant proposal is the extension of occupational maternity (OMP) and adoption pay (OAP). The suggested approach set out in the national guidance extends the paid leave period to 26 weeks' full pay, followed by 13 weeks' statutory pay. This would also be applied to Adoption Leave and pay, which follows broadly the OMP/OAP provisions. The other options would be to keep the current provision or, as has been done at a small number of Services, apply local enhancement to extend full pay to 39 weeks and half pay for 13 weeks, taking paid entitlement to the full maternity leave period of 52 weeks;
- (d) it is difficult to predict the exact cost of increasing occupational maternity/adoption payments, as it will vary based on the numbers taking the leave in a period, their service length, their pay level and the length of the maternity/adoption leave. The current cost of £4132.75 could rise to £11,663.60, but this indicative figure does not include backfilling roles during maternity leave periods which, if maternity pay is increased, would also cost proportionately more, as the cost could not be off-set by reduced or no-pay periods. It is not possible to claim any further costs from central Government beyond the statutory payments;
- (e) the enhanced maternity benefits are a key issue for the recruitment and retention of female employees between the ages of 16 and 45. Enhanced maternity benefits is also an important step towards closing the gender pay gap. The enhancement of provision does have a financial cost, but it is a positive step in supporting and retaining women, particularly in operational roles;
- (f) the Committee felt that the further provision for parental bereavement leave is a very positive step. In the event of miscarriage, the policy will not give the father an automatic right to paid leave, but all situations will be considered for compassionate leave on a case-by-case basis.

**Resolved to support the proposed changes to maternity provisions as set out under 'Option 2' in the report and approve the associated changes to local occupational maternity and adoption pay.**

## **22 Review of Commissioned Services for Safe and Well Visits**

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the proposed changes to the Service's Safe and Well Visit delivery model. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the recent inspection of the Service highlighted that, at 3.3 per 1,000 population, the number of Safe and Well Visits (SWVs) being completed is lower than the England average of 10 visits per 1,000 population. However, SWVs completed by external providers did not count towards the Service's completion statistics as recorded in the latest inspection;

- (b) over the last 16 months, work has been carried out to improve protection and prevention services, with a priority to increase the number of SWVs carried out by 2022 while retaining the high proportion that are delivered to those at high or very high risk. The Service has exceeded its target of completing over 6,000 SWVs in 2019/20 and hopes to reach 8,500, which represents an increase of over 50% in productivity, with a proportionate increase in the number of high-risk referrals. Consideration is being given to how the Service can continue to improve its productivity by completing 9,000 visits in 2020/21 and 12,000 in 2021/22. However, it is vital to ensure that the focus remains on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable as fully as possible;
- (c) it is proposed that the £45,000 that is used currently to commission external providers is used instead to increase the Service's establishment of Grade 3 Specialist Home Safety Operatives (SHSOs) by 1.5 posts. These SHSOs will conduct high-risk SWVs and manage the follow-up activities. The additional 1.5 SHSOs will complete approximately 500 SWVs per year and each of these visits will count towards inspection statistics. In addition, the new roles will provide additional capacity within the Persons at Risk Team to assist with the increased follow-up activities, which will grow with increased SWV productivity;
- (d) this model will place the function under direct Service performance management control to assure consistency in delivery and accurate recording, driving the ambition to increase Service productivity to address community risk. The Service will continue to work with external providers as referring partners, with more partnership and joint working measures in place with Council housing officers, Nottingham City Signposting and the NCHA Homeless Prevention Service. Appropriate information sharing agreements are in place and the database systems will be upgraded. Further training opportunities will be introduced for SHSOs with partners around engaging with vulnerable people, including those suffering from alcohol issues or the threat of homelessness, in addition to the existing training for age-related issues;
- (e) if any councillors are interested in joining the SWVs, the senior officers would be glad to discuss this with the Persons at Risk Team.

The Committee extended its thanks to the Persons at Risk Team for their significant work in this vital area.

**Resolved to support bringing the delivery of Safe and Well Visits (supplied currently through commissioned services) in-house and recommend the associated creation of an additional 1.5 full-time equivalent Grade 3 Specialist Home Safety Operative posts within the establishment to the Fire Authority.**

## **23 Update on the Service Response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection**

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented an update on the Service's response to the outcomes of the recent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. The following points were discussed:

- (a) each of the 25 areas for improvement identified within the inspection report have been allocated to a lead officer, with clear milestones and expected outcomes in place, and 8 of the areas are under the remit of Human Resources. The Chief Inspector has now published an overall report on the Fire and Rescue Services in England to identify trends across the country and a cross-mapping exercise is underway to ensure that the Service is addressing all of the issues;
- (b) Area 17 (“The Service should put appropriate mechanisms in place to enable closer monitoring of hours worked by staff”): the issues highlighted by the inspection relate primarily to dual contractors, who are whole-time firefighters who also provide support to on-call stations, and the lack of overview of the hours they have worked and rest breaks they have taken across both roles. To address this, a weekly timesheet has been for dual contractors that will be reviewed locally and by the On-Call team. An annual welfare review meeting for dual contractors and those undertaking secondary employment via an i-Trent workflow will be undertaken by line managers and will include a health and stress questionnaire. The system will rely on self-declaration, so it will be monitored closely. The requirement for staff to take adequate breaks will be managed carefully with the need to ensure full operational coverage for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire;
- (c) Area 18 (“The Service should develop a wellbeing strategy and a system to improve understanding of health, safety and wellbeing trends”): the inspectors felt that there was a strong level of good practice within the Service, but that there was not an over-arching health and wellbeing strategy to draw it all together, and that the effectiveness of the wellbeing measures were not evaluated consistently. A Wellbeing Strategy has been drafted for publication and a programme of Occupational Health site visits will take place throughout 2020 to promote the strategy and the support available through Occupational Health provision. The Occupational Health and Fitness Manager will provide an update report on a quarterly basis to analyse sickness and wellbeing trends;
- (d) Area 19 (“The Service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation”): the inspectors felt that the Service promotes its values to improve behaviour, but 15% staff reported witnessing recent behaviour not in line with Service values in the staff survey. To address this, there will be a consistent promotion of core values with a focus on the theme of ‘One Team’. The Harassment Policy and Procedure has been reviewed in consultation with the representative bodies. A forum for discussing harassment and bullying issues has been scheduled to establish the employee experience and identify steps to promote a workplace culture where inappropriate language and behaviour is recognised as unacceptable and challenged. A Behavioural Competency Framework will be introduced alongside the new Planning, Development and Review process, which will set out expectations of positive behaviours, including Value and Respect for Others. Further training will also be provided to supervisory managers so that they are more confident in resolving issues informally, through conversations and mediation, rather than escalating incidents to the formal process when this may not be required or proportionate;
- (e) Area 20 (“The Service should develop a training plan that clearly aligns and supports its workforce plan”): each department has established its training needs for 2020/21 and an ICT Training Plan will be implemented. A review has been undertaken of

current leadership development processes and a revised Middle Management programme will be introduced, to increase diversity in leadership roles. A Supervisory Development Programme has been scheduled to provide support for newly promoted Crew and Watch Managers. A new Planning, Development and Review process is in place to identify the training and development requirements for all staff, including non-operational employees, and individual training plans will be produced. Work will be carried out to align the operational training planner with wider aspects of workforce development and training;

- (f) Area 22 (“The Service should improve communication around positive action through all levels of the organisation”): a Joint Statement on Positive Action has been drafted for circulation via the internal communications channels, following consultation with representative bodies. A positive action programme will be implemented as part of the planning and resourcing for whole-time recruitment in 2021, to seek to achieve a strong level of representation amongst the candidates. Events will be held at stations and will involve station personnel in supporting them. A briefing will be issued to explain fully what the Service aims to achieve through the proposed positive action and to challenge any negative assumptions, and middle management is being engaged in ensuring that this is successful. However, turnover in the Service is low, recruitment is irregular and there is a geographical requirement for on-call rolls, so it will take time for the effects of positive action to be reflected in the workforce;
- (g) Area 23 (“The Service should ensure individual performance targets clearly support objectives within the Integrated Risk Management Plan”): a new Performance and Development Policy has been published and will be promoted as part of the launch of the Performance Development Review process, with training on how this will be accessed through the i-Trent system. Departmental plans are in place, with a new progression procedure;
- (h) Area 24 (“The Service should improve staff awareness and understanding of promotion and selection process”): a progression process to higher-level operational roles is undertaken annually. A Progression Procedure is in place, but further mentoring and coaching will be provided to prospective candidates to ensure that they understand the process and selection criteria clearly;
- (i) Area 25 (“The Service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders”): a review will be undertaken to identify the options and potential benefits of introducing a high-potential talent management scheme. However, the Service is a relatively small organisation with low staff turnover, so it may only be viable to introduce this kind of scheme in partnership with another Service or Services. Informal development programmes are in place, such as Aspiring Leaders. Steps will be taken to make this provision more formal, using a mix of internal and external management development trainers. External providers are giving general management training, while a trainer is being tendered for to provide additional training for middle and senior managers. The Service has good links with Nottingham Trent University and bursaries are available for staff who are looking to develop other work-related skills and proficiencies.

The Committee noted the report.

## **24 Human Resources Update**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the key Human Resources metrics for the period of 1 October to 31 December 2019, including absence reporting from the period of 1 July to 30 September 2019. The following points were discussed:

- (a) sickness absence has decreased since the preceding period, but is slightly higher than the same period in the previous year. Long-term conditions (often musculoskeletal and mental health related) account for 70% of sickness absence. Sickness absence within the Service is slightly higher than the sector average, but work is underway to reduce this. Conversations are taking place with the Services with the lowest levels of long-term sickness absence, to seek to improve 'return to work' provision;
- (b) the new Joint Control Room with the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service has seen relatively high sickness absence during the early period of its establishment. As the team is small and specialised, it is difficult to provide cover. However, it is anticipated that the situation will improve once the new ways of working become established;
- (c) 20 members of staff left the Service (mainly due to retirement) and 6 new staff joined. One Employment Tribunal has been registered, following an employee's departure. As part of the process, an internal investigation is underway.

The Committee noted the report.

## **25 Equalities Monitoring Report**

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, presented a report on the breakdown of the workforce by protected characteristics between 1 January and 31 December 2019, and the work being done to improve diversity at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the number of women in the workforce has increased to 15.54% over the last two years, with 43 (6.13%) employed in operational roles (including management roles). However, 35.85% of the new starters in 2019 were women. The proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees has also increased slightly, but less significantly than hoped. Declarations of sexuality, disability and mental health are also low, so work is underway to ensure that employees are comfortable discussing these subjects in the work environment. Further reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility at work are under consideration, in addition to improvements in equalities monitoring;
- (b) the number of women and BAME employees in middle management and above is low, so positive action is in place to help create pathways for potential management candidates who are at fire fighter level, currently. A low number of BAME candidates have been successful in applying for support roles. An audit system is in place for these applications and a Human Resources representative is in place on appointment panels, to ensure that the process is fair. It is also a primary aim to

ensure diversity on the interview panels. Work is taking place to explore ways to attract more BAME citizens to apply for roles in the Service.

The Committee noted the report.

## **26 Apprenticeship Update**

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on apprenticeships within the Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) it has been Government policy since 2016 to increase the number of apprenticeships available, particularly within the public sector. Significant progress has been made in the numbers of apprentices employed by the Service since January 2019 in both operational firefighter and support roles, for which the Service is able to draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy;
- (b) this has been due primarily to the intake from the 2018 firefighter selection process, which has seen 19 apprentice firefighters contracted to the Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard. This is a 26-month apprenticeship that, subject to successful completion, covers the full development period (including spending time on station), so that the apprentice firefighters become competent at the end of the assessment period. The first cohort of eleven apprentice firefighters commenced their apprenticeship in January 2019. A further cohort of eight apprentice firefighters commenced in September 2019;
- (c) public sector employers have been set a target of 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starters. Based on a Service workforce of 798 (excluding those with dual contract arrangements), this would require 18 new apprenticeships each year. From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, 16.67% of all new starters were on apprenticeships, representing 1.32% of the total workforce. Overall, apprentices account for 2.4% of the total headcount. Despite the increase in new-start apprenticeships, which saw 11 new apprenticeship start between September 2018 and September 2019, the Service did not meet this target during 2018-19;
- (d) while the target is based on a headcount and includes the whole workforce, the Service is unable to register on-call trainees onto the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship, as they are not able to comply with the eligibility criteria due to their hours of work. This means that the majority of appointments made each year cannot be counted against the target. However, the overall headcount figure (against which the percentage of new starts is calculated) does include on-call employees. This has been recognised by the National Fire Chiefs' Council as a sector issue and lobbying is taking place to address this anomaly;
- (e) the apprenticeship programme is inspected by Ofsted, to ensure that the right standards of education are maintained. The Service is now also an accredited training provider at a national level, giving access to the Government's training levy. Five members of staff in support roles are undertaking new qualifications.

The Committee noted the report.

**27 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.**

**28 Exempt Minutes**

The Committee confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

**29 Regrading of Posts**

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the outcomes of the job evaluation process that has led to a permanent change to the support (non-uniformed) establishment.

The Committee noted the report.