



**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 17 July 2015 from 10.01am to 11.39am.**

Membership

Present

Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Mike Pringle
Councillor Gail Turner
Councillor Liz Yates

Absent

Councillor Michael Payne

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Substitute for Councillor Michael Payne)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Wayne Bowcock - Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Sue Maycock - Head of Finance
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

13 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

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

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Michael Payne, for whom Councillor Darrell Pulk substituted.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

16 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 at June 2015 as a true record and they were signed by the presiding Chair.

17 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates members on the key human resources metrics for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) compared to the last quarter, sickness absence was reduced by 13%;
- (b) work continues with regard to preventing , and where this is not possible, resolving, musculoskeletal and mental health issues which account for a substantial proportion of long term sickness;
- (c) 2 disciplinary actions have been raised;
- (d) there are currently six additional whole time posts within the service, this is due to staff moving from a closed station but officers are confident that the pay budgets will be achieved by the end of the year.

Whilst members welcomed the report, especially the reduction in sickness absence, it was suggested that a percentage comparison between Quarter 1 this year and Quarter 1 last year would better reflect seasonal sickness absences.

RESOLVED to note the report.

18 REVIEW OF WORKFORCE PLAN

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which outlines the Corporate Workforce Plan 2014-16 and outlines proposals for the updated plan for 2015-17.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- (a) overall staffing numbers have decreased from 1007 to 966 employees during the past year;
- (b) there has been an a reduction in whole-time operational posts from 531 to 510 with a temporary over establishment of six firefighters;
- (c) the transfer of staff from Mansfield and Highfields stations following a reduction in whole-time crewing, has meant that compulsory redundancies have not been necessary;
- (d) it was predicted that 26 whole-time personnel would leave the Service during 2014/15 however only 17 did so;

- (e) it was predicted that 26 Retained Duty System staff (RDS) would leave during 2014/15, however 36 personnel left;
- (f) it has not been necessary to recruit whole-time firefighters but a RDS recruitment campaign during 2014 recruited 23 RDS trainee firefighters;
- (g) during 2014/15 there has been a reduction of 8 full-time non-operational support posts;
- (h) it was predicted that 15 support personnel would leave the Service during 2014-15 but 24 left;
- (i) there was a 7.14% turnover in Control staff during 2014/15 but due to the forthcoming implementation of the Tri-Service Mobilising System in September 2015, fixed term contracts are in place to provide cover and ensure resilience whilst training takes place;
- (j) overall absence of whole time and support employees has increased from 5.8 days to 8.25 days per employee, however, 67% of these absences are due to long-term medical conditions with a duration exceeding 28 days;
- (k) as there have not been any whole-time recruitment drives, it has not been possible to meet the equalities target of 19% of female new entrants and 10% of BME for new entrants to operational roles;
- (l) the Service is now within the top 100 employers of the Stonewall index, recognising the work undertaken to promote lesbian gay and transgender issues within the workforce;
- (m) in 2013 the Service gained accreditation as an 'excellent organisation' under the Fire Service Equality Framework;
- (n) with regard to the 2015-17 Workforce Plan, reductions of approximately £3.47 million are necessary with most of this figure predicted to be found as a result of workforce reductions;
- (o) the key areas of workforce issues identified in the revised 2015-17 Workforce Plan are outlined within the report.

Responses to members' questions and comments included:

- (p) with regard to Stonewall, the Service was striving to achieve improvements in equalities not just to achieve a top 100 ranking, but because this was the right thing to do;

- (q) during a period of staff reductions and very little recruitment, it has not been possible to focus on achieving equalities targets with regard to staffing. However, the most viable route for pursuing equality recruitment targets is through succession planning;
- (r) further consideration should be given to the current equalities targets and whether they are set too high for what can realistically be achieved in today's society when a range of impressively proactive engagement has not enabled the Service to meet the equalities targets set;
- (s) this organisation is not alone in struggling to meet equality targets so it is important to share information with partners on the recruitment methods which were successful;
- (t) recruitment of retained staff has been slightly relaxed only in that the requirement of living or working 'within five minutes travel of the station' is unrealistic in some rural areas where fewer people are within the immediate vicinity of stations. However, distance from stations has to be restrictive and there has to be a cut-off point as appliances are responding to an emergency;
- (u) progress has currently halted with regards to control collaboration with Leicestershire. This position is scheduled for review in September and an update will be provided to Members soon after;
- (v) having considered the end of employment terms and conditions of both the County and City Councils and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, some Councillors are concerned that there is a significant difference in the 'pay-off period' with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service providing up to 66 weeks compared to local authorities providing 50 weeks and less. In times of budgetary constraint this significant difference needs to be reviewed;
- (w) a national review of terms and conditions was undertaken by Adrian Thomas prior to the election but his report has not yet been released. In addition, the LGA are also considering terms and conditions. The point has been previously discussed within the Finance Team with regard to the budget and employee expenses for which the Authority has control (this does not include pay);
- (x) to date the workforce has been supportive of the financial restraints placed on the Service and the requirements to make savings, however, it is important to ensure that in such difficult times and with further difficult decisions to be made, the workforce continues to support the decisions of the Authority. It is proposed that the best course of action regarding any consideration to changes in Terms and Conditions should primarily be discussed with the Chair of the Human Resources

Committee, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer, prior to progressing the issue to Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) for a report regarding equality targets to be submitted to a future meeting.**

19 HER MAJESTY'S ARMED FORCES CORPORATE COVENANT

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which sought approval to sign the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant.

Historically the Service has supported the Armed Forces community through a voluntary pledge but now have the opportunity to sign the covenant, which includes a core statement of commitment in that:

- i. no member of the Armed Forces community should face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services compared to any other citizen;
- ii. in some circumstances special treatment may be appropriate, especially for the injured or bereaved.

The discipline and qualities of Armed Force's personnel sit well with the requirements of the Emergency Services and provides all round benefits for the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, communities, and the individual.

The Service currently employs six Armed Force Reservists, some of whom have been deployed to active duty.

During November 2014 the support of the Service was recognised with a silver award from Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE). To be considered as qualifying for the Gold award, commitments to the corporate covenant must be shown. Already measures are in place to enhance the Service's inclusion of ex-forces personnel.

Members are assured that where combat related mental health issues occur, such as post-traumatic stress, support was provided jointly from the Armed Forces and the Fire Service. It is also noted that if a reservist employee is deployed, the military will reimburse the salary costs to the Service.

RESOLVED to approve the signing of the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant, which will be valid for a period of five years.

20 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda item, 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 ad 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

21 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY APPLICATIONS

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report regarding applications for voluntary redundancy.

RESOLVED for the recommendations within the report to be approved.