

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE held
in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters,
Barmston Mere, Sunderland on MONDAY,
27TH OCTOBER, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Boyes, Forbes, McMillan and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Bollands.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 18th February, 2008, Part I (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Capability/Performance Procedure

The Chief Fire Officer, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) requesting approval of the Capability/Performance procedure.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that the proposed Authority's Capability Procedure was designed to effectively manage capability and poor performance issues in respect of individual employees, in a fair, consistent and supportive manner.

The primary objective of the capability procedure was to effect an improvement in the employees' work performance through the provision of guidance, advice, training and support.

Councillor Woodward questioned whether the process the Authority followed could be illustrated in a flow chart to aid understanding of the procedures followed.

2. It was RESOLVED that:-
 - (i) The Capability /Performance Procedure be approved, and
 - (ii) further reports be received as appropriate

Stretch Targets – National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) detailing specific stretch targets in respect of women and members of the black and ethnic communities.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Members of the Committee were informed that to encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to strive for more rapid improvement in the diversity of their workforce, CLG would allocate an additional capital grant payment to those Authorities that commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets.

The higher targets outlined within the Strategy state:

- By 2013 a minimum of 18% of new entrants to the operational service to be women
- By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at 2% to 5% above the minority ethnic representation in the local working population

Further to the report of June 2008 where the Authority agreed in principle to commit to stretch targets, Communities and Local Government had indicated that Authority's

committing to the stretch targets must confirm their intentions formally by 28th November 2008. If approved, the Chief Fire Officer would ensure the appropriate application is made.

Councillor Woodwark queried the current Statistic for number of new women entrants, and was advised that this currently amounted to 4.7% of the workforce although this may seem low, Councillors were advised that this figure was derived from a self declaration form and some members of staff may chose not to declare it.

3. It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) adoption of the stretch targets as detailed in this report; be approved,
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

North East Regional Fire-fighter Recruitment Campaign 2008 – Recruitment Process Statistics and Positive Action Analysis

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) outlining the process and outcomes in relation to potential workforce representation and providing an indication into the effectiveness of this Authority's Positive Action Programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that in total 6,137 individuals requested an application form. 89% of the candidates downloading a form described themselves as 'Male' and 11% described themselves as 'Female'. Encouragingly this campaign has seen a high increase in the percentage of female candidates who had successfully passed all stages of the tests, including final interview.

In comparison to the 2006/07 campaign, there had also been a substantial increase in the number BME candidates applying to become Fire-fighters equating to over a three fold increase. However, it was disappointing to note that the success rate of the BME candidates was lower than the 2006/07 campaign.

A new programme would be developed to ensure the next recruitment campaign was even more successful. A greater force would be placed on the fitness levels for females and more external assistance would be provided for BME candidates relating to the required literacy and numeracy skills, which would aid them being successful at written stage.

4. It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the actions of the Chief Fire Officer be endorsed and noted;
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Proposed Equality Framework for Local Government

The Chief Fire Officer, Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) updating members on the proposed Equality Framework for Local Government.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Members were reminded that in February 2008 the Authority achieved level three of the ESLG and would therefore work towards the highest level of 'excellent' within the EFLG. An 'excellent' Authority would have to clearly demonstrate that the members and officers had a reputation for championing equality issues and ensure that the equality issues relevant to their communities were embedded in strategic plans, local authority agreements and local delivery plans.

Members, officers, key stakeholders and community members would have to clearly demonstrate that they were confident about equality issues and their relevance for the Authority and their own responsibilities.

5. Upon discussion, it was RESOLVED that
 - (i) the contents of this report be noted;
 - (ii) the progress toward an 'excellent' rating be supported;
 - (iii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of exempt information relating to any individual or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), or any consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council and its employees (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 1, 2, 3 and 4).

(Signed) T. WRIGHT,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.