

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
held in the Fire and Rescue
Headquarters, Barmston Mere,
Sunderland on MONDAY 13 JULY
2015 at 10.30am

Present:

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Councillors Haley, Mole, Price, Renton, Stephenson and Wright

Part I

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 23 April 2015, Part I be confirmed as a correct record.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that the Firefighters Pension Scheme – Scheme Manager Obligations and Discretions would be going to the next full Authority meeting with a recommendation to delegate a number of decisions to this Committee.

Councillor Wright requested an update to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that work continued on the action plan and the Authority were currently looking at the Stonewall Award, together with a number of other awards, to consider whether they wished to continue this in relation to the day to day work required and the costs attached. Any costs attached to proposals would be brought back through the Authority.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Capeling explained that the Authority had done extremely well in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and this information was used to support work towards the FRS Equality Framework, due in the early part of 2016.

Councillor Haley noted the forthcoming Newcastle Pride event to be held on Saturday 18 July 2015. Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Baines stated that an excellent attendance was expected.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Awards 2015

The Chief Fire Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report informing Members of the Authority's support of a category at the prestigious CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards and informing members of the successful candidate.

ACFO Baines advised that the Authority had supported the 2015 CIPD Awards, sponsoring the Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Award, which Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service had won on two successive occasions.

The event was attended by over 400 people from a range of organisations and provided a good opportunity to network and listen to examples of good HR practice.

ACFO Baines reported that there were two main candidates for the Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Award, Northumberland NHS and Muckle LLP. Applications were considered in great detail and Muckle LLP were announced the winners. The judging panel had been particularly impressed with the number of activities undertaken by Muckle LLP, including the recruitment and sponsorship of undergraduates, recruiting from the local job market and promoting positive action campaigns, which were having a real impact on the company and the North East.

ACFO Baines advised that the benefits derived from participating in the CIPD included the opportunity to learn best practice, networking and developing helpful links with other organisations and providing exposure for volunteers, advocates and staff to experience diverse aspects of the business community.

Councillor Mole commented that he felt the initiative was very good and recommended a letter was forwarded to the Local Authority representative, to share good practice. ACFO Baines advised that the Authority's support had been recognised in a range of local publicity, including highlights within a dedicated 16 page supplement of the Journal.

Councillor Bell acknowledged that from a networking viewpoint, a range of individuals attended.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) further reports would be submitted to the Committee as appropriate; and

- (iii) the Assistant Chief Fire Officer send a letter to the Local Authority representative, to share good practice.

One Voice Community Awards

The Chief Fire Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the recent One Voice Community Awards, and the successful outcome for a member of the Community Engagement Team in receiving an individual contribution award.

ACFO Baines advised that the One Voice Awards was a new annual event that brought together individuals, organisation and agencies to recognise, share and celebrate work in improving the well-being of BME communities throughout the City of Sunderland. The individual contribution award recognised the contribution of any person working in the City of Sunderland in the support and enhancement of the BME Community and Network and, demonstrated how the individual's actions had contributed to the well-being and support of individuals within the BME community.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines shared that he was pleased to report that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Community Advocate, Laila Abdullah, received the individual contribution award for her services to the BME communities in Sunderland. Feedback received from the event had been huge across all areas.

3. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Annual Development Day 2015

The Chief Fire Officer and Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report to inform Members of the AFSA Charity Dinner and Development Day, held on 21 and 22 May 2015.

ACFO Baines advised that the Charity Dinner Day had attracted a number of attendees from across the UK AFSA network; together with representatives from local mosques and the business community. He further commended the number of fire service officers who attended voluntarily to host guests on each table.

The Development Day was also well attended, with a theme of 'building community wellbeing and cohesion' through safety and prevention. The event also allowed members and officers to form key connections, to assist in strengthening the agenda for Asian communities in Tyne and Wear. ACFO Baines advised that he, together with other Senior Management Team members, facilitated workshops to explore key areas of wellbeing and cohesion.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that Mehrban Sadiq, Community Advocate, had playing a key role in chairing the event; and furthermore had subsequently been confirmed as the Chair of AFSA.

Councillor Bell and Councillor Wright confirmed that the events had gone very well.

Councillor Bell recommended that a letter was forwarded to Mehrban Sadiq, to congratulate him on the success of the event and in being confirmed as Chair of AFSA.

4. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) further reports would be submitted to the Committee as appropriate; and
- (iii) Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines send a letter on behalf of the Committee to Mehrban Sadiq, congratulating him on the event and his appointment as Chair.

Occupational Health Unit – Annual Report 2015

The Chief Fire Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide a summary of the services provided by the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and its staff over the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that the Occupational Health Unit had encountered staffing issues due to illness and absence of two key members of staff.

He explained that the role of Occupational Health had evolved dramatically over the past three decades, and had continued to develop and adjust to challenges. The emphasis was on the prevention of work related ill health, along with a wider agenda of wellbeing, both physical and mental. The Authority continued to work very well with Sunderland City Council for the provision of Service Medical Advisor (SMA) opinion.

The OHU were moving towards the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, Occupation Health Accreditation. The aim of the standard was to support the achievement of safe, appropriate and effective quality of occupational health services in the UK. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that the accreditation was based on six domains, consisting of 49 standards to be met.

Health Surveillance remained a major priority for the OHU. Risk assessments identified employees that had a hazardous role requiring proactive surveillance, which achieved two outcomes; to detect early signs of occupational ill health and to determine fitness for role. This was particularly important where the physical demands of operational fire fighters were concerned.

ACFO Baines advised that in total 102 initial assessments and reviews were undertaken by the SMA this year, for individuals who had joined the organisation – twenty of which were inter service transfers.

Health promotions undertaken this year included displays across the service highlighting breast cancer and prostate cancer awareness and mental health awareness.

ACFO Baines reported that 67 referrals had been submitted for personnel with musculoskeletal problems, for either assessment or assessment and treatment.

Within the Authority there was a scheme to provide early access for staff to medical specialists in order to gain an assessment and treatment to aid an earlier return to work.

Aerobic Capacity Testing had now been in place for four years and this underpinned a fire fighter's fitness which is a key component of effectiveness and safety on the incident ground.

ACFO Baines advised that the OHU undertook a client satisfaction survey and 100% of responses rating the facilities as good or excellent. He advised that the data provided in terms of OHU Service detailed the responses received in terms of experience and confidence in the service.

ACFO Baines stated that in terms of the level of change implemented within the TWFRS he believed this outcome was good.

ACFO Baines advised that 146 health surveillances were completed this year for the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Price noted the 52 members of staff were assigned altered duties and questioned if the age range was known. ACFO Baines stated that this information would be confirmed and provided. ACFO Officer Baines advised that the TWFRS encouraged and supported employees to return to work and put into place reasonable adjustments.

Councillor Stephenson questioned the provision of services to Northumberland and whether this was considered for the trading company. ACFO Baines stated that this was undertaken directly between both fire services, however, this was being held in abeyance at the current time due to the absence of key staff to ensure stabilisation. He highlighted that the OHU was running with agency staff at present and provided a summary of the staff changes to date within the unit.

Councillor Bell questioned if the TWFRS were looking at early appointments, to ensure support was available, as they would not want to lose momentum. ACFO Baines explained that he believed the Authority would be looking at a longer handover period to ensure the stability of the handover.

The Chief Fire Officer noted the 98% positive response to the survey question 'Did you have confidence and trust in the Occupational Health staff' and advised that when the OHU first commenced the vast majority of staff were suspicious of the reasons the unit had been set up and he felt that, due to the great work of the unit, staff across the Service really understood the reasons for an OHU.

The Chief Fire Officer also noted the link between the pensions dispute and Chief Fire Officers Association's work with regards to physical fitness. The Chief Fire Officer Capeling stated that the fact that the TWFRS had an OHU in place for a long

period had been beneficial for their Authority. The Chief Fire Officers Association would consider what may become national standards in relation to levels of fitness.

5. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be submitted to the Committee as appropriate.

Leadership Development and Succession Planning

The Chief Fire Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report advising Members of the work being undertaken to evolve the Authority's approach to leadership and development and succession planning.

ACFO Baines advised that as the Authority progressed through the organisation and management reviews, it was necessary to define the future approach to leadership development and succession planning.

He acknowledged that people were central to delivering successful change and improving performance in the challenging environment the Authority currently operated in. Organisational and individual leadership, together with planning the future size, shape and skill set of the workforce, was essential to the leadership development. As such the Chief Fire Officer had commissioned work to define the future of the Authority's leadership and management development programme and reconsider succession planning needs going forward.

ACFO Baines explained that, in communicating the leadership development and succession planning work to staff, it had been emphasised that the programme was about development to lead in their current roles, 'being the best they can be'. In some cases this may lead to undertaking roles at the same level and in others promotion. He advised that the proposed Development Programme would be brought to this Committee.

Whilst there were no financial implications for the report being tabled, a future report proposing a development programme would require Members to consider allocation of budget.

Councillor Stephenson stated that she felt this was an excellent proposal as it evidenced forward planning and training new skills, thus investing in staff and recognising change. Assistant Chief Officer Baines agreed with this comment stating that this was a tailored approach for individuals, recognising the degree of change which had been undertaken.

6. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and

- (ii) further reports be submitted to the Committee as appropriate; and

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines received the Chair's permission to raise a further item of business.

Last Post

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines advised that at South Shields and Tynemouth community fire stations, the Authority had held live screenings of the Last Post being sounded for the 30,000th time at the Menin Gate in Ypres, to commemorate those who had fallen. The screenings lasted for approximately 45 minutes and were well attended by over 80 people in total. Councillor Wright and Officers represented the Authority and were joined by, ex-royal marines, cadets and family members.

ACFO Baines expressed his thanks to Station Manager Adrian Jackson for arranging the event.

7. RESOLVED that the information provided be noted.

Councillor Price noted that there had been an article in the local media of a fire fighter who, whilst off duty, had talked down an individual from Wear Bridge and questioned whether this would be recognised. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Baines confirmed he was aware of the incident and was awaiting a report from the Area Manager for Service Delivery, which would be presented to the Chief Fire Officer for consideration.

(Signed) J. BELL,
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.

