

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Item 3 (ii)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 24 July 2017 at 10.30am in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Barmston Mere, Sunderland

Present:

Councillor Haley in the Chair.

Councillors Flynn, Oliver, Pickard, Renton and Wright.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Stephenson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 6 February 2017 Part I, be confirmed as a correct record.

Newcastle Pride

The Chair commended the effort which had been made by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service during the previous weekend in support of the Newcastle Pride event. This had been a fantastic event with some great speeches which emphasised the benefits of working in partnership.

Councillor Wright echoed these comments and extended thanks to all who had attended the Pride breakfast including Authority members and senior management. He suggested that some thought could be given to getting more watches involved in the event and the Chair noted that there could be more partner organisations involved.

ACFO Baines advised that invitations were extended to 250 people representing between 50 and 60 organisations and prior to the event, over 100 had confirmed attendance, with some turning up on the day. More people were being drawn in from the community and this would be able to be expanded by moving into the main hall for future events.

Councillor Joanne Bell

The Chair paid tribute to the former Chair of the Committee, Councillor Joanne Bell, who had stood down from the Fire Authority. He acknowledged the many years of hard work and the valuable contribution which she had made to the Authority and on human resources matters. He formally recorded his thanks to Councillor Bell on behalf of the Human Resources Committee.

Dyslexia Awareness

Councillor Wright advised that he had recently attending a course with members of staff on dyslexia awareness and had found this very informative. He recommended that all Members attended this if they had the opportunity.

Investors in People 2017 Improvement Action Plan

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the development of the Investors in People (IIP) Improvement Action Plan and update on the performance criteria which the Authority had been assessed against during the audit.

The IIP audit had taken place in February 2017 and had resulted in Gold accreditation for the third time in a row, with the Service also retaining its 'Champion Status'. The Gold standard was only awarded to the top 2% of organisations assessment and was more difficult to achieve under the new standard.

296 staff had completed surveys prior to the onsite visit and the Service had achieved the following levels: -

- **High Performing** level of performance for one indicator
- **Advanced** level of performance for six of the nine indicators
- **Established** level of performance for two indicators

Arising from the audit was the development of an Improvement Action Plan which took forward the 16 areas which had been identified for improvement. The Action Plan had been distributed to delegated leads for implementation, and subsequent inclusion, in the relevant Service and Departmental plans and was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Pickard commented that the issue of engagement seemed to be an ongoing theme and asked if an audit was carried out to ascertain if the message had got through to employees. The Area Manager for Human Resources stated that

there was a lot of work being done to promote engagement and highlighted that the Authority had signed off on IRMP actions for ways of working.

ACFO Baines stated that significant staff engagement was carried out but it could be necessary to refresh some of the tools which were used for this. Some other types of survey tools had been trialled and the leadership development programme had been rolled out to 400 out of 850 staff which would help the Authority moving forward. He added that there had been a number of negative comments made about engagement in the surveys but the opinions expressed at face to face meetings painted a different picture.

Councillor Wright asked if all staff had email addresses and would have ample time to read communications from the senior management team. ACFO Baines confirmed that all staff had access to emails and that local managers were charged with ensuring that firefighters had the opportunity to read communication updates. There was also an 'ask the Chief' email which all members of staff could access. It was acknowledged that more could be done, but the Service continually worked to improve communication.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that senior management did not have any trepidation about sharing difficult messages with employees, such as the potential pension liability for the Authority, and good feedback was received which assisted with the context of the next IRMP. One on one and group communication did seem to be gaining traction and working well.

The Chair referred to the Authority receiving the Gold award and noted that there was a Platinum level which was being investigated. The Area Manager for Human Resources advised that there were two organisations in the North East which had received the Platinum award, however these were schools and both had a workforce of less than 200. Further work would be done and would be reported back to the Human Resources Committee as it progressed.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report and the action plan be noted;
- (ii) the implementation of the improvement action plan be supported; and
- (iii) further reports be received as necessary.

Organisation Management Review (OMR) Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report to update Members with progress on implementation of the Organisational and Management Review.

In November 2014 the Authority agreed the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014-2017 which included a review of the whole organisation and the way it worked. The scope of the review included: -

- All management roles from Station Manager and Scale Point 38 upwards
- The Flexible Duty Officer system
- All services delivered by roles below Station Manager and Scale Point 38 across the organisations with the exception of the following:
 - Frontline operational activities which were currently subject to change following the Response review;
 - Delivery of Cleaning and Catering services and the Control function, all of which had been recently reviewed.

In September 2016, the Fire Authority had approved revised proposals which would result in a reduction of 41.9 FTE roles whilst still continuing to retain a mix of roles and skills to ensure organisational requirements were met. The implementation of the proposals had been phased over a number of months to ensure minimum interruptions to business and as well as ensuring that employees were supported as necessary.

The structure for senior leaders/heads of department had been confirmed on 9 January 2017 with all but one post being filled and a recruitment process about to begin for the Head of Finance and Procurement. Other roles had now been filled, however there were still four people within the project pool who were actively being supported in seeking alternative roles within the organisation.

Councillor Oliver referred to external appointments being made as part of the implementation of the proposals and ACFO Baines advised that the Human Resources Plan had created a recruitment freeze for the Service and there were a number of people in temporary positions. Posts were opened to internal applicants and positions were filled but appointments had not been made to key posts and it had been necessary to recruit a small number of external staff.

The Chair asked about the circumstances of the remaining project pool staff and ACFO Baines advised that the four individuals would receive pay protection until April 2018 and that the management team was working closely with them to identify alternative roles. Although it was not possible to give a cast iron guarantee, all efforts would be made to avoid compulsory redundancy.

3. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as required.

Equality, Diversity, Behaviours and Organisational Culture in the Fire Service

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Deputy Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report informing Members of a Memorandum of Understanding in

relation to Equality, Diversity, Behaviours and Organisational Culture in the Fire Service.

The Memorandum had been signed between the National Fire Chiefs Council, five trade unions, the Asian Fire Service Association, Quiltbag, Stonewall and Women in the Fire Service and was intended to further promote diversity and inclusion within the fire service. The Area Manager for Human Resources advised that the current make-up of the fire service was 95% white and 96% male.

The Committee had previously talked about the Authority's equality journey and its placing of 13th in the Excellence in Diversity Awards. The Memorandum set out and committed the Service to a number of principles, the majority of which were already embedded within the current ways of working for Tyne and Wear. There were 12 actions which the Service was undertaking and developing as part of its equality and inclusion work which could be summarised as: -

- Raising awareness of the role of positive action and the law around it to address diversity in recruitment and progression.
- Providing support and training in identifying and countering the effects of unconscious bias whilst supporting inclusive leadership training for managers.
- Sharing best practice amongst other Fire and Rescue Services and working with a future inspectorate to ensure that inspection drives diversity and inclusion.
- The monitoring of new starters and leavers from the organisation to identify barriers to recruitment and retention.

Councillor Wright stated that he did not think that Tyne and Wear required a Memorandum of Understanding as it was his firm belief that this was the direction of travel for the Service. He commented that over the last eight years there had been a recruitment freeze which had severely hindered the ability of Tyne and Wear to diversify its workforce. It was frustrating because the Authority was doing everything possible to diversify but Councillor Wright added that he was proud of, and congratulated all staff involved in this work.

ACFO Baines informed the Committee that the Memorandum had been developed off the back of other reports, such as the review of the culture of Essex Fire Service, but the benefit of bringing items such as this to the Committee was that it demonstrated the great work done by the Authority and the enthusiasm and passion of the staff. The new Organisational Development Strategy talked about the Authority's strategy and approach to equality and diversity.

The Chair asked if the organisation had become more diverse due to losing a number of staff over recent years and queried the profile of staff employed by the Service who were from other organisations. ACFO Baines stated that he did not have the specific detail but the diversity profile had improved both within the organisation and the volunteers who had been recruited. The profile had again improved as a result of staff being seconded to Tyne and Wear and ACFO Baines emphasised that inclusivity and positive action was promoted in all of the work that the Service did.

Councillor Wright noted that as the Authority approached 2018 and hopefully a recruitment programme, it was now time to let communities know about the approach to equality and diversity in the organisation. ACFO Baines commented that the messages were there but have not been pushed too much as the Service had not been able to recruit.

Councillor Flynn commented that sometimes black and ethnic minority communities would not be looking for the kind of role which the Authority offered. Councillor Wright agreed that it had to be approached correctly and it was better to go out to communities in their own environment where they felt more relaxed. It was a challenge but he felt that smaller events and one to one conversations would be more successful in communicating these messages.

The Human Resources Manager advised that some work had been taking place in the background to obtain external perceptions of the organisation in terms of the service and firefighters. This would inform the approach when the recruitment process started and the data gathered would help to challenge perceptions.

Having considered the report, it was: -

4. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be endorsed; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

‘Dying to Work’ Charter

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Deputy Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with information regarding the ‘Dying to Work’ campaign.

The Joint Consultative Committee had brought forward detail of this new initiative which campaigned for additional employment protection for terminally ill employees. The ‘Dying to Work’ campaign was seeking to see terminal illness recognised as a protected characteristic so that an employee would have a protected period where they could not be dismissed as a result of their condition. This could encourage employees to choose how to spend their final years, knowing that their job was protected and the future financial security for their family guaranteed.

The Authority had been asked to support the campaign by signing a voluntary charter which sets out an agreed way in which employees would be supported, protected and guided throughout their employment following a terminal diagnosis. The text of the ‘Dying to Work’ charter was as follows: -

- We recognise that terminal illness requires support and understanding and not additional and avoidable stress and worry.
- Terminally ill workers will be secure in the knowledge that we will support them

following their diagnosis and we recognise that, safe and reasonable work can help maintain dignity, offer a valuable distraction and can be therapeutic in itself.

- We will provide our employees with the security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families which helps them through the this challenging period with dignity and without undue financial loss.
- We support the TUC's Dying to Work campaign so that all employees battling terminal illness have adequate employment protection and have their death in service benefits protected for the loved ones they leave behind.

The Chair asked if this extended to employees with close family members who were terminally ill and it was stated that this particular charter did not but the Service had always done a lot of work to support those employees who were caring for a family member with a terminal illness. Councillor Wright echoed the remarks, commenting that having protection was equally important for a carer as well as a patient.

The Personnel Advisor referred to the fourth bullet point on the charter which suggested that employees would be better off if they stayed in employment, when this might not always be the case. A better option for families could be ill health retirement and this was part of the case work around the situation.

Councillor Pickard agreed that individuals needed to be supported but they were all in different circumstances and ACFO Baines highlighted that individual cases had always been dealt with on their merits.

The Human Resources Manager explained that the TUC were concerned that people would lose their job because they were ill, and this was an issue in many organisations but not at Tyne and Wear. She said that she could have a conversation with the TUC about the wording of the charter. Councillor Pickard suggested that it should say that the organisation would determine the right approach for each individual and the Strategic Finance Manager noted that the use of the term 'adequate employment protection' might cover this. ACFO Baines added that the third bullet point also referred to the 'best course of action'.

Councillor Flynn commented that it was right for the TUC to flag this matter up and suggested that maybe the pension scheme regulations should change to address this. Councillor Wright was aware that terminal illness was on the agenda for pension schemes but it was at an early stage and efforts should be made to push this.

5. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report be endorsed;
- (ii) the Dying to Work campaign be supported;
- (iii) the Authority sign up to the Dying to Work Charter; and
- (iv) further reports be received as required.

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Awards 2017

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report informing Members of the Authority's support for the prestigious CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards.

The awards ceremony had taken place on 16 June 2017 and the Authority had taken the opportunity to sponsor the 'Employability and Diversity' award which it had previously won on two successive occasions. The event was well intended and offered great insight into some of the fantastic work which was going on in the area.

The nominees for the Employability and Diversity award had been Home Group, Sage UK Limited and Your Homes Newcastle and Your Homes Newcastle had been named the winners in recognition of their innovative programme which had employed otherwise unemployed tenants to work for their organisation on six month contracts. More than 50 tenants had taken up the opportunity and over 80% had secured permanent employment as a result.

The Chair commented that the event was well worth attending if Members got the chance and ACFO Baines highlighted that the ceremony also enabled the Service to have a presence on stage and to talk about the breadth of work which it was involved in.

6. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Office of Surveillance Commissioners – Inspection Report

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisory to the Authority submitted a joint report providing an update following the inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioner (OSC) of the arrangements made by the Service to ensure compliance with the statutory provisions that govern the use of covert surveillance.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) regulated any covert investigations carried out by a number of public bodies. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service must work within the 2000 Act framework with regard to the authorisation of Directed Surveillance and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources and was inspected to ensure that powers were being used properly.

The Service was inspected for the first time in April 2013 and a subsequent desk based inspection took place in November 2016. There were a number of recommendations arising from the report as follow: -

- Create a Central Record of Authorisation relating to part 11 of RIPA which was in compliance with the codes of practice.
- Amend the RIPA policy and procedures document.
- Ensure that regular reports were made available to Elected Members of the Fire Authority, which included information relating to both RIPA activity and inactivity.
- Establish a RIPA training programme with regular refresher training of all those that could be involved in the RIPA process including those who may manage CHIS
- Raise RIPA awareness throughout the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Area Manager for Human Resources advised that it was proposed to bring an annual report in relation to this activity in the future. He stated that the powers were very rarely used and the last time had been in relation to securing data sources for the Lisle Road fire in 2007

Councillor Haley asked if this also covered CCTV on appliances and the Area Manager for Human Resources stated that this did not apply because it was classed as an asset.

Councillor Wright asked if, rather than producing an annual report, it would be better to say that if powers were used under RIPA, it would be reported to the next meeting of the Authority. The Area Manager agreed that this would save time, however the action plan arising from the inspection required an annual report to be produced.

7. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report be noted;
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate; and
- (iii) an annual summary report of the grant of authorisations for RIPA be received.

(Signed) G HALEY
Chair

