



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

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 4 February 2019 at 10.30am in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Barmston Mere, Sunderland

Present:

Councillor Haley in the Chair.

Councillors Bell, Curran, Dodds, Flynn, Pickard and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephenson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

20. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 8 October 2018 Part I, be confirmed as a correct record.

Firefighter Recruitment

The Chair informed the Committee that there were two new firefighters in attendance at the meeting as observers. He welcomed the firefighter trainees and wished them well on what he hoped would be a long and successful career with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

HMICFRS Inspection

ACFO Baines advised Members that they might see a number of different faces around Fire Headquarters, as there were 11 inspectors in the building as part of the fieldwork stage of the HMICFRS inspection of the Service.

NJC Green Book Pay Award 2019

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report updating members on the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Circular NJC5/12/17 referring to the 'Green Book' employee pay award for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020.

The Human Resources Manager advised that a pay award had been determined on the basis of a national agreement for a two year pay increase from 1 April 2018. The previous pay award to 31 March 2018 and had covered the introduction of the National Living Wage and during this time, the NJC committed to reviewing the pay spine and this involved realigning some pay and grading to reflect the National Living Wage.

The majority of employees, those of Spinal Column Point 20 and above received an uplift of 2% from 1 April 2018 and would receive a further 1% on 1 April 2019. Those on Spinal Column Point 6 to 19 would receive an uplift of between £8.50 and £10.08 per hour in year one and would move to a minimum National Living Wage of £9.00 in year two. In order to deal with the compacting of differentials at the lower end of the pay spine, the bottom twelve pay points have been paired off into six new pay points.

A new national pay spine was to be introduced in 2019 and consultation had taken place with Unison and GMB with regard to options for implementing this. The options considered were: -

- Option 1 Apply new pay, then increment which will see scale 6 employees receiving the uplift in 2019 and scale 3 receiving the uplift in 2020.
- Option 2 Apply increment, then new pay which will see scale 3 employees receiving the uplift in 2019 and scale 6 receiving the uplift in 2020
- Option 3 Apply a mix of both of the above which will see all employees receiving the uplift in 2019

An Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out and found that options 1 and 2 would have a detrimental impact on specific groups of employees and that option 3 would be the most inclusive, with the least impact and was recommended for progression.

The costs of implementing the second year of the pay award was estimated at £255,000 for 2019/2020 and this cost would be met from provision within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Corporate pay awards would be built into the revenue budget for 2019/2020 and future years.

The Chair noted that the Equality Impact Assessment provided a clear steer for the way forward and ACFO Baines said that this further reinforced that those receiving lower pay and also with protected characteristics, would receive equality of impact.

Councillor Pickard said that he understood that most local authorities were implementing the pay award in the same way, however the Human Resources Manager commented that the trade unions had suggested that the Tyne and Wear were the first authority adopting this approach.

Having considered the report, it was: -

21. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) the implementation of option 3 be endorsed; and
- (iii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Our Equality Journey Continues

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report updating Members on the Equality Journey and continued progression in regard to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Members had previously received reports in October 2016 and 2017 setting out the Equality Journey from 2000 and this report highlighted the key activities and learning which had been undertaken since 2017.

The Human Resources Manager stated that equality and diversity and inclusion was at the top of the agenda with everything the Service did and it continued to work with a number of organisations on this including the Asian Fire Service Association, Women in the Fire Service, North East Regional Employers Association, Inclusive Top 50 Employers and Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme. This ensured that the most up to date policies and procedures were in place.

A new Employee Information System 'Core' had been introduced this year which had enabled the refresh of employee data. Four staff network groups; LGBT, BME, Disability and Gender, continued to support employees and to support initiatives such as Northern Pride, Black History Month, IDAHOBIT Day and International Women's Day. The LGBT Network had also organised the first National Fire Service LGBT Conference which had been attended by over 150 from 27 different services.

The Gender Network Group led on the development of The Girls' Network which aimed to improve the lives of young women through coaching and mentoring from professional women. There had been five mentors on the programme last year and six mentors would be attending a matching event in the next week.

The Disability Network Group had provided opportunities for employees to attend training on Hate Crime, Dyslexia Awareness, Deaf Awareness and Autism. The Blue Light Choir had gone from strength to strength in supporting colleagues with their mental health. The Authority also supported those affected by Holocaust and the refugee and asylum-seeking communities.

The 'Dying to Work' Charter had been introduced this year to support employees who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness or life changing condition.

The Service continued to develop its approach to diversifying the workforce and 24 trainee firefighters had been recruited this year which had attracted 25% diversity. 44 corporate roles had also been recruited which further developed the diversity of the workforce.

The FRSEF 2016-2019 equality objectives had been outlined in five key development areas: -

1. Knowing your communities – developing a tailored targeting strategy for our vulnerable communities
2. Shaping leadership, partnership and organisational commitment – celebrating our successes
3. Community engagement and satisfaction – funding arrangements, volunteer remits
4. Responsive services and customer care – sharing good practice
5. A modern and diverse workforce – promotion process, workforce profile, progression of staff networks

It was felt that by continuing to focus on the equality objectives, the Service would represent its communities better. Equality, diversity and inclusion were embedded in Tyne and Wear's principles, core values and behaviours.

Councillor Woodwork commented that there was strong progress being made but there was always more to do. He noted that more clarity around the 'Dying to Work' Charter and the scoping around the trans agenda might be required.

ACFO Baines referred to the work on the Leadership Bond and stated that these were not just a line in a report but were values which staff wanted leaders to have. The report provided a high-level view and the Service was seeking to involve more elected Members in initiatives. It was acknowledged that there were still challenges, particularly in areas such as diversifying the workforce.

Councillor Dodds welcomed the emphasis on the work being a continuous journey and advised that at the recent LGA Conference, the HMICFRS representative had commented that a lot of inspections had found that the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework was not clearly understood. He noted that the Inspectorate was likely to look at this report.

The Human Resources Manager commented that she was continuously proud that it was not Human Resources driving this, it was the staff who really pushed this forward and asked the Service to do more for their communities.

The Chair noted that he had seen some feedback from the first wave of inspections and the 'People' strand was bringing down the judgement. Councillor Flynn referred to the LGBT Conference and that it had been good to hear first-hand from people about their experiences and he found it hard to believe that inspectors would not be impressed by this.

Councillor Curran endorsed what other councillors had said and commented on the wonderful feeling of embrace in the headquarters building. He asked how the staff network groups operated and the Human Resources Manager explained that they all had terms of reference aligning to the Equality Constitution. The networks held quarterly meetings which were open and had good representation from across the service. The groups developed action plans, undertook policy development, awareness raising and knowledge sharing.

ACFO Baines noted that the increase in numbers attending network groups was good to see, including station-based employees. It was also noted that to be involved in a network group, an employee did not have to have one of the protected characteristics.

Councillor Dodds asked if there was still an Equality and Diversity Committee and it was confirmed that there was and the chairship alternated between the service and the FBU. Councillor Pickard acknowledged the support of the trade unions in moving the agenda forward.

Having considered the report, it was: -

22. RESOLVED that: -

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

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report providing Members with an update regarding the submission to enter the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2018 (WEI).

ACFO Baines reminded Members that the Service had engaged with Stonewall since 2011 to benchmark and evaluate performance in relation to LGBT equality and inclusion. In 2014 the Authority had achieved 8th place in the index and its LGBT Network had been selected as a Star Performing Network on Stonewall's list of 75 networks across the country.

Stonewall launched a new framework in 2015 and the Authority achieved 37th place in the revised WEI. An entry was not submitted in 2016 as the focus of resources was directed towards the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework Assessment (FRSEF) for which the Authority had gained the award at 'Excellent' Level for the

second time.

The 2018/2019 submission for WEI involved completing a comprehensive on-line questionnaire including supporting evidence and staff took part in a survey about attitudes towards culture, diversity and inclusion. The process was extremely thorough and a record number of 445 employers employing over 3.7million people submitted entries to the 2019 WEI.

The results announced on 21 January 2019 placed the Authority at 84th in the index and it was one of only three fire and rescue services and one of eight emergency services to be successful. Maintaining the Authority's status as a Top 100 Inclusive Employer was a strong performance, especially given the challenges of reduced resources in the Service.

The report also highlighted the performance of other North East employers and the success of the region's employers in relation to equality and inclusion and the Committee were advised that Tyne and Wear was the second ranked fire service overall.

The Chair offered congratulations to all North East based organisations and the Cheshire Fire and Rescue service which was the top ranked fire and rescue service at 3rd in the index.

Councillor Dodds was pleased to hear that the Authority did not write procedures in order to win awards and felt that the watch culture would be damaged if it was felt that the only reason that initiatives came through was to win awards. Councillor Flynn also appreciated this approach and noted that inspectors would be looking for what was behind the reports and procedures.

Councillor Woodward commented that he suspected that the differences in positions were rather marginal and it should not be about where an organisation was in the league, but what it did. The Chair added that the Authority achieved this success on a shoestring budget where some organisations had the ability to invest huge sums in the work.

23. RESOLVED that: -

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

Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework Action Plan Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing an update following the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) 'Excellent' re-accreditation in 2016 and the progress against the resultant action plan. Members were reminded that the FRSEF was a peer review assessment by the Local Government Association and the review had included analysis of the Service's self-

assessment and a two-day site visit for assessors with managers, staff and other stakeholders. The challenge benchmarked against five areas of performance: -

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Involving your communities
- Responsive services and customer care
- A skilled and committed workforce

The Authority was re-accredited with 'Excellent' status with some areas for consideration to help the Authority to maintain the standard. The peer team also highlighted some examples of innovative projects and initiatives such as Safetyworks!, commitment to communities through Community Advocates and the broad range of communication media used to inform and educate the community.

An action plan had been developed following the review which encompassed the five performance areas of Human Resources, Policy, Community Safety, Collaboration and Partnership. There were 15 suggested areas of improvement which were progressed as specific equality objectives with 17 specific actions.

16 of the actions were complete with one partially complete with a revised target date; this related to the network groups undertaking modules of the Engage programme. ACFO Baines advised that this was an ongoing element of the Leadership Programme and 67% of managers had been through this programme. Managers with network groups had been enrolled in the Engage Programme. It was highlighted that HMICFRS would look at this strand under 'People' and the Human Resources Manager had spoken to the LGA peer review team as the Authority was keen to understand the inspection feedback.

The Chair noted the good progress which had been made, with just one element which had slipped. ACFO Baines said that there were fewer staff but with more joining networks; and that support would be given to ensure that everyone had been provided the opportunity to undertake the relevant elements of the programme.

24. RESOLVED that: -

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

Annual Equality Data Report

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the completion of the Authority's draft Annual Equality Data Report 2018.

The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 had introduced a general duty in relation to the nine protected characteristics and specific duties to assist public authorities in meeting the general duty which required the Authority to publish information to

demonstrate compliance with the general duty by 31 January annually. The Authority's Annual Equality Data Report 2018 was published internally and externally before 31 January 2019 for a consultation period lasting until the end of February 2019.

The Area Manager, Strategy and Performance highlighted some of the data within the report, noting that some areas where there were large percentage changes could be attributed to people moving around within the service. The employee age analysis showed an ageing workforce but there had been a slight reduction in the average age in the last year.

The Authority had been successful in achieving the 'Disability Confident Employer' award and had also gained the 'Better Health at Work' Bronze Award. There was 100% retention rate from staff who had been on maternity leave.

More detailed information had been obtained on sexual orientation and the report on the gender pay gap showed that more work needed to be done. It was highlighted that grievances and dismissals within the Authority were low and Members were reminded that the report was publicly available on the Fire Service website and was currently out for consultation.

Councillor Woodward commented that some of the statistics were difficult to draw conclusions from, for example the number of respondents who had ticked 'Prefer Not to Say' when asked about their ethnicity which seemed statistically significant but did not indicate the direction of travel. He also noted that the Jedi religious group had dropped from six to two and that 68 people had not stated any sexual orientation when asked the question, yet no one had responded in this way in 2017.

The Area Manager stated that some of the language used had been changed for the 2018 survey and the Service had worked with Stonewall on this. There was a new system and new data being collected and this was based on what people were willing to declare.

ACFO Baines added that individuals might fall across a number of areas of characteristics but the ethos of the Service was about valuing people for who they were. There had been a 32% reduction in staff in recent years and this did have an impact on the data, with a moving landscape, which made it more difficult to judge against previous reports.

Councillor Pickard referred to the pay by gender and suggested that it could be an incremental issue with Green Book employees. ACFO Baines said that the gap was predominantly observed with Grey Book employees who have additional roles. There were different levels for managers under Grey and Green Book terms and conditions and some Grey Books managers receive 20% allowance for being part of a Flexible Duty Officers on call rota, for dealing with emergency incidents. Councillor Pickard noted that overtime opportunities would not be available for office-based employees but that the Service might like to consider this as part of their action plan.

ACFO Baines highlighted that the new management assessment process had just been released and it was hoped that applications would be received from diverse parts of the workforce.

Having considered the report, it was: -

25. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the draft Annual Equality Data Report 2018 be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Fitness for Life

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing Members with an update of the work that had been undertaken to provide the service with an overarching approach to the health and wellbeing of all employees, titled 'fitness for life'.

ACFO Baines advised that there were national standards for fitness for operational firefighters, which the Authority applies. In addition to these standards, improving the health and wellbeing of the whole workforce was a key local priority, leading to the development of the 'Fitness For Life' approach which had been running for 18 months to two years.

The Area Manager, Strategy and Performance emphasised that the Authority's approach was to support all in the organisation and the work of the fitness for life group had covered the following key areas: -

- Health Surveillance
- Lifestyle Awareness
- Health Promotion and Wellbeing
- Trauma Support Team

There was a lot of work carried out with the FBU in broadening out health and wellbeing sessions and activity was co-delivered. All locations except the Technical Services Centre had gymnasiums and gym equipment, however the centre was due to have facilities installed, and operational firefighters were allocated training time within their working day.

The Area Manager highlighted that the Trauma Support Team had supported the London Fire Brigade after the Grenfell Tower fire and members of this voluntary group would go out to debrief a watch after a significant or traumatic incident.

The Service was also investing £150,000 in new equipment for stations and this would allow new fitness tests to be rolled out. Support had been received from the fitness advisor at County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and Members of the Committee were assured that the health, safety and wellbeing of all

of the Service's employees was paramount.

The Chair noted that the approach was about providing an environment where firefighters and the workforce could be as fit as they needed to be. Councillor Dodds welcomed the report and queried if there might be any way of including former employees as maintaining contact with people could help to extend life expectancy. This type of advice and information broadened the aspect of what the service did and was beneficial to all. ACFO Baines would look at how this approach for advice might be extended to former employees.

Councillor Woodward commented that it was a great report and that all Authority Members would agree that the approach should be for the whole workforce. He felt that the Trauma Support Team was a very important resource for firefighters who had an extremely mentally stressful job. Councillor Curran asked about the make up of the Trauma Support Team and the Area Manager stated that they represented a broad mix of people in the organisation. Volunteers come forward from different roles and bring different things to the table.

Upon consideration of the report it was: -

26. RESOLVED that: -

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

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

27. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to any individual or which was likely to reveal the identity of any individual or information relating to consultations /negotiations in connection with any labour matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4).

(Signed) G HALEY
Chair