

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3 February 2020 at 10.30am in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Barmston Mere, Sunderland

Present:

Councillor Haley in the Chair.

Councillors Butler, Flynn, Pickard, Taylor and Woodward.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephenson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

19. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 7 October 2019 Part I, be confirmed as a correct record.

The Chair welcomed Nicola Moore, Head of Human Resources, to her first meeting of the Committee. He then reported that he had attended the Passing Out of new recruits and inter-service transfers in December and commented on the quality and calibre of the recruits.

Apprenticeships

The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive (Clerk to The Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report to provide an update regarding the development of the Authority's approach to apprenticeships.

The Strategic HR Manager reminded Members of the Government Reform agenda and the plan to increase the number of apprentices by requiring public bodies, in England with 250 or more staff, to employ an average of 2.3% of their workforce as new apprenticeships between April 2017 and March 2022. The Government had implemented a levy for UK employers of 0.5% of total pay bill, where the employer's annual pay bill is more than £3million. The target for the Fire and Rescue Service sector is to see 4000 staff following an apprenticeship by 2022.

TWFRS has been recognised as an Employer provider on the Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP) and therefore eligible to receive government funding to train apprentices within their own and external organisations.

The Strategic HR Manager brought Members' attention to the rigorous procurement process that had been followed, TWFRS had established a partnership with New College Durham (NCD) to deliver the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship. This would employ NCD's experience in developing and delivering the Firefighter Apprenticeship to the most recent cohorts of trainee firefighters. The Firefighter Apprenticeship would fully align within the current 36 months Firefighter Development Programme. It was anticipated that by March 2020, 38 Phase II Firefighters would have been enrolled on the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship.

The design of the Emergency Services Contact Handler Apprenticeship was currently under design and would be the first apprenticeship to be delivered solely by TWFRS. This would enable new Control Room staff to work towards an apprenticeship as part of their development. In addition to the apprenticeships outlined above, the Service had one apprentice in the Technical Services department; an Assistant Accountant who was due to be enrolled in an apprenticeship scheme; together with planning in place to recruit apprentices into Corporate Services.

Referring to the financial implication, Members noted that the successful enrolment of personnel on apprenticeships would enable TWFRS to draw down funds from the apprenticeship levy. For the current year, 2019-20, the anticipated contribution to the levy would be £121, 229. Extrapolating this indicative figure across an intake of 20 trainee firefighters, would see a potential draw down of up to £138,340 over a 24 month period, per cohort of 20 firefighters.

Councillor Flynn was pleased that the importance of the apprenticeship scheme had been reflected in the level of the apprenticeship salary. Councillor Woodwork commented on the excellent work that had gone into establishing the partnership with NCD providing confidence that quality outcomes would be achieved.

20 RESOLVED that:

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

Annual Equality Data and Gender Pay Gap Report 2018/19

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report for Members' consideration of the Authority's draft Annual Equality Data Report 2018/19, incorporating the Gender Pay Gap report and to approve its publication.

The Authority had a specific duty to publish equality data under the Equality Act 2010, covering Annual Equality Data and Gender Pay Gap Data. Previously, the Authority had published these in two separate reports. Following a review of the legislative requirements and publishing dates, the two reports had been combined into one report to clarify and simplify presented data to aid comprehension by a range of audiences.

As required under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Authority's Annual Equality Data Report 2019 had been published internally and externally in draft, before 31 January 2019. The Gender Pay Gap reporting would be published by 30 March 2020. As the requirements had been combined into one report, the amalgamated report would be published by 31 January each year, with the current document under consultation until the end of February 2020.

Referring to Page 26, Mean and Median pay gap, Members were advised that the pay gap could be attributed to the number of women employed in lower paid roles. 55% of female Green Book employees were paid at the lower end of the pay points (Scale 3 and below), these included administration, cleaning and catering roles. With women occupying only 13% of higher level management posts, compared to 87% occupied by male employees, this may have a further impact on the gender pay gap within the Service. There was also a gender difference within the pay for Control room employees. This was due to the three new Control Firefighters being female who were conditioned to trainee and development rates of pay, until they had completed their training, usually following a 3 year programme.

In terms of reducing the gap going forward, Members were advised that this would be achieved through staff turnover and new recruits. Councillor Butler praised the Authority for its inclusivity which had also been acknowledged by HMI. The Chair commented that achieving a gender balance was an issue for all Fire Services.

Having considered the report it was:-

21 RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Authority's draft Annual Equality Data Report 2018/19 incorporating the Gender Pay Gap report and its publication be approved;
- (ii) Further reports be received as appropriate.

Improvement Frameworks - Investors in People (IiP)

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report updating

Members on the decision to continue to engage the Investors in People (IiP) improvement framework for the next 3 years from March 2020-23.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) originally gained the IiP award in December 2007. It was the first emergency service nationally to achieve Gold status, which it had maintained, despite significant organisational change including industrial action, Organisational Management and Response Reviews; all in the context of austerity and challenging financial circumstances. It had also been awarded 'Champion' status. In January 2020, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) considered the value of IiP as an objective improvement framework and discussed a number of options going forward.

ACO Baines brought Members' attention to the factors considered by ELT when looking at options to enable improvement planning which included:

- IiP had shaped, guided and challenged planned approaches to people and improvement projects, including Engage Leadership Development and Performance Development Review (PDR);
- IiP had supported and challenged the Service's direction for Organisational Development over the last three years, enabling an objective view and deeper insight into HR, L&OD and policy and performance capability;
- The action plans developed in response to the IiP process had further focused continuous improvement across the Service, which had been a key factor in securing 'Good' in the recent HMICFRS inspection.

ELT had been appraised of the following options in considering external challenge: to cease IiP; source an alternative external framework or continue with IiP accreditation. Having discussed and considered the options, ELT had determined to continue with IiP accreditation to support long-term improvement alongside the HMICFRS inspection process. ELT had committed to review the accreditation process following each cycle, to ensure the Service continued to receive best value from the investment of time and resources.

Members acknowledged the importance of external challenge and guidance to support continuous improvement.

22 RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and further reports/updates be received.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority) and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report for Members' consideration of the results of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2019/2020 (WEI) which were published on 30 January 2020.

The Strategic HR Manager reported that the Authority had first entered the Stonewall WEI in 2011 to benchmark and evaluate its performance in relation to LGBT equality and inclusion, achieving 101st place. The entries that had since been made achieved

a range of rankings within the top 100 list; the highest being 8th place in 2014.

In 2015, Stonewall launched a new framework assessment and questionnaire, which was implemented over a 2 year period. The Authority did not submit an entry for 2016/17 WEI as the focus of resources was directed towards the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF), where the Authority was successful in being awarded the 'Excellent' level.

Following the 2015 framework changes, further significant changes were made to the submission process for 2017/18, with a greater focus on Trans inclusion, a clear criteria of gender identity being assessed towards the overall score and ranking and evidence of challenge.

Participating in the WEI involved completing a comprehensive on-line questionnaire including supporting evidence. The questionnaire was divided into specific categories and requested information and evidence regarding; policy and practice, staff engagement, staff development and support, monitoring, community engagement, procurement and innovative development of LGBT related initiatives. The submission process was extremely thorough, with entries marked by two teams, and further assessment of organisations in the Top 100 being marked a third time to verify the score.

The Authority had worked hard to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within policies, procedures and practices and had been recognised through the FRSEF and Inclusive Top 50 Employers list.

Members were advised that the results of the 2020 WEI had been published on 30 January and therefore were unavailable when report was written. The Stonewall Top 100 Employers 2020 list was tabled and a verbal report was provided by the Strategic HR Manager.

Members noted that TWFRS was placed 157 out of 503: whilst not in the top 100, the Authority was in the top third. The initial feedback had been very limited however detailed feedback was yet to be received on how the Authority could improve. It was noted that competition had been fierce.

Councillor Woodward agreed that feedback would be useful to identify how the Authority could improve however commented that the position achieved was less important than the work carried out on a day to day basis. The Strategic HR Manager replied that there were two approaches that needed to be considered: to collate as many points as possible or provide a direction of travel that was best for the staff.

Councillor Taylor raised concerns that the Authority had dropped from being ranked 59 2017/18 to 157 in 2019/20 and asked if previous feedback had been acted upon. In response ACFO Baines explained that the previous feedback had been related to the previous WEI methodology. However, Stonewall had changed the focus of the marking scheme to Trans but as the Authority did not have a specific Trans Policy, this affected our marks. He agreed the reduced ranking was disappointing but was pleased to reflect on the mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion across the service. Councillor Flynn agreed that it was important to look beyond the Policy and

referred to the LGBT conference that the Authority had hosted. In addition he commented that the organisation delivered an inclusive, equal and inspiring environment for all employees.

The Chair commented that the work had been undertaken within financial restraints and that he was more concerned about the HMI judgement.

23. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The content of the report be noted;
- (ii) The drive to continuously improve equality, diversity and inclusion within the Service and the community of Tyne and Wear be supported;
and
- (iii) Further reports be received as required.

Firefighter Recruitment - Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Strategic Finance Manager and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to update Members on the latest position in relation to Firefighter recruitment, and likely next steps.

ACFO Baines provided an overview of the report. He explained that recruitment of firefighters was critical to ensuring the effective management of operational deployment, in-line with budget and risk critical activities. For a number of years Fire and Rescue Services across the UK had found diversifying the workforce to be a challenge. An inclusive campaign was essential and TWFRS had a long-standing commitment to diversifying the workforce through inclusive workforce campaigns.

In 2018 the Service worked in collaboration with County Durham and Darlington and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Services to undertake a recruitment campaign, resulting in 23 TWFRS Trainee Firefighters successfully completing the course and being deployed to station from 17 February 2019. From this campaign a further course of Trainee Firefighters commenced their 14 week initial training from 16 September 2019, with 17 from TWFRS and 3 from Isle of Man. Eighteen completed the course which culminated in a Passing Out on 19 December, and the 15 new TWFRS Firefighters were deployed to stations in the following two weeks. In October 2019 a recruitment campaign was held for inter-service transfers, designed to attract experienced, serving Firefighters and Crew Managers from other parts of the country. They followed an intensive training course before being deployed to station in December.

Referring to the 2020 Recruitment Campaign, ACFO Baines reported that building on succession planning from the 2018/19 campaign, current and anticipated vacancies would be filled through both a Wholetime (Trainee) Firefighter Recruitment Campaign, which was launched in November 2019, together with a further Inter Service Transfer campaign, which commenced during January 2020.

For the Wholetime Recruitment Campaign the Service was in collaboration with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service. The recruitment campaign had a number of phases, including an inclusive workforce initiative to promote diversity and inclusion.

One thousand places had been available on the taster sessions held in October 2019 which raised awareness of the recruitment campaign and to encourage applications from all areas of the diverse community and under represented groups.

There had been 2,751 applicants from which 2,647 people had completed the Behavioural Styles Questionnaire and Situational Judgement Tests of whom 1,252 undertook the ability tests and 254 were invited to attend role-related tests during January 2020.

There were 155 candidates invited to interview of which 152 attended. A cohort of 24 Trainee Firefighters is anticipated to commence a 14-week phase 1 training during mid April 2020.

In addition, it was anticipated that there would be 20 successful applications for Inter Service Transfers which would ensure a mix of skills across the Service.

Councillor Pickard referred to the age profile of the workforce and the importance of a balanced approach to recruitment. He commented on the benefits of the inter-service transfers of attracting experienced Firefighters and Crew Managers whilst also recruiting trainee firefighters. ACFO Baines commented on the difficulties due to austerity when staff had had to be released, however the Training Centre was an excellent facility for new people joining the Service. The Chair commented on the significant number of trainee Firefighters who ACFO Baines reported were bringing specialist skills to the Service.

The CFO Lowther referred to the Core Spending Power and the offer of a one-year draft settlement. He commented that despite TWFRS having the smallest spending power, the trepidatious and challenging financial journey to build a Service for the community would continue. He was concerned that the inefficiencies of the reduced Core Spending Review for TWFRS was not how risks should be financed. ACFO Baines added that the trainee Firefighters would complete their training in 36 months and that more Firefighters would be required going forward however this would be challenging with a one year financial settlement.

Councillor Woodwark commented on the challenge of planning a service for 3-4 years with a funding formula for less than a year and that the Fire Service would not be to blame in the event of a mistake being made. He raised concern about the added increased stress on the Service to do the best with no money.

Councillor Butler suggested all Members raised concerns at their respective Council meeting to lobby government for a fairer funding formula. Councillor Flynn seconded Councillor Butler's suggestion and urged all Northern Politicians to raise with Government Ministers.

24 RESOLVED that:

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

Challenging Perceptions Conference

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 National BAME Conference entitled 'Challenging Perceptions', organised and hosted at Tyne and Wear Fire & Rescue Service (TWFRS) Headquarters on 26 February 2020.

ACFO Baines highlighted that equality, diversity and inclusion were fundamental to the Service's culture and values and that there were four service staff network groups: BAME, Disability, LGBT+ and Gender. The BAME Network Group worked across a range of areas including supporting BME staff, engaged with communities and strived to improve the understanding of the diverse make-up of Tyne and Wear. They worked closely with HR professionals to ensure policies and procedures relating to BME matters were user friendly, reflected up to date legislation, good practice and communicated effectively to staff. The Group also worked externally to promote the Service as an employer of choice; reflecting the needs of all staff and of the wider community.

Referring to the Challenging Perceptions Conference, ACFO Baines reported that it focused on three key areas:

- Challenging Perceptions around recruitment in the emergency services;
- Challenging Perceptions around support and developing BAME staff; and
- Challenging Perceptions around lived experiences of communities.

Members noted it would be a collaborative event with contributions from partners in emergency services, academia, community and charity sector, to which they were cordially invited. The event would offer an opportunity for staff to share ideas and network and for HR and recruitment professionals to consider further how to engage with staff from diverse backgrounds.

Councillor Flynn commented that it would be useful for HR Committee members to attend however there was a Pension Training Event in Leeds that day. Therefore, he suggested the invitation be extended to the wider Members of the Fire Authority. ACFO Baines agreed to extend the invite to all Fire Authority Members.

25. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) The Service's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continue to be supported.

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

26. 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 consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (including the Authority holding that information). (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 4).

(Signed) G HALEY
Chair