



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

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 October 2019 at 10.30am in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Barmston Mere, Sunderland

Present:

Councillor Haley in the Chair.

Councillors Butler, Flynn, Taylor and Woodward.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodds and Stephenson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

10. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 22 July 2019 Part I, be confirmed as a correct record.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Butler to his first meeting of the Committee. He then referred to the Sunderland Pride event which had been held just over a week ago. The event had gone extremely well and the breakfast at Sunderland Central Fire Station was well attended.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Achievement Award

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 informing Members that the Service had been awarded the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Achievement Award.

The internationally-renowned RoSPA Health and Safety Awards scheme was based on an organisation's individual occupational health and safety performance assessed against the judging criteria. The majority of awards marked achievement at merit, bronze, silver and gold levels and entrants had to provide a profile of the organisation and evidence of a good health and safety management system.

In June 2019, the Service made a submission which referenced 92 separate pieces of evidence and a range of accident, ill health and enforcement data. The Service was awarded a RoSPA Gold Achievement Award in recognition of practices and achievements for health and safety.

ACO Baines stated that the Service were delighted to receive and maintain this award and that a huge amount of day to day work contributed to this achievement. Councillor Woodwark echoed the comments and congratulated the Service on the work which had gone into this award.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

11. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the accolade given to the Service be recognised; and
- (ii) the commitment of staff and representative bodies for their contribution to a safe working environment be acknowledged.

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 providing Members with an update regarding the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2019/2020 (WEI) submission.

The Human Resources Manager advised that the Authority had worked with Stonewall for a number of years now and the assessment was becoming more and more competitive with the Authority achieving 59th place in 2017/2018 and 84th in 2018/2019. The Authority had also been commended for its commitment to trans inclusion.

The WEI 2019/2020 involved the submission of an online questionnaire which included supporting evidence and 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 Authority's Stonewall representative had gone through the elements of the WEI which had not been achieved last year, for example, the Authority had an inclusive policy but Stonewall were looking specifically for trans issues to be referenced in the policy. It was hoped to get more questionnaires completed this year and the outcome of the submission would be known at the end of January 2020.

The Chair commented that the position which the Authority achieved was less important than the work carried out in the day to day job. With reference to the questionnaire completion rate, he asked if Stonewall would use this in their assessment. The Human Resources Manager advised that Stonewall did not mark the completion rate but responses tended to be from those involved in the LGBT community and were wholly positive; it was an ambition to make this more reflective of the whole workforce.

Councillor Flynn made reference to the LGBT conference which had been held in the Service area earlier in the year and asked if this was likely to be repeated. ACO Baines said that a national conference was being planned and venues were being determined. The LGBT network at this level had been revitalised through the conference.

ACO Baines highlighted that there had been some good engagement around Bi-visibility Week and there had been an emotive article written by a serving firefighter. The Service was focused on ensuring people were comfortable and could be who they wanted to be. Tyne and Wear worked on an all inclusive basis and did not focus on specific strands.

12. 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.

Better Health at Work Award – Silver Award

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a report outlining the details of the Better Health at Work Award scheme and the Authority's success in achieving the Silver Award.

The Better Health at Work Award scheme was a regional scheme which encouraged employers to improve the health of their employees. The aims of the award were to: -

- support improvements in health and wellbeing for North East workers and

- employers;
- create an inclusive, standardised framework within the region;
- complement existing, local workplace health schemes;
- give regional recognition to those workplaces which actively promote the health of their employees; and
- share good practice and promote the contribution workplace health can make to a healthy community.

The Authority had received the Bronze award in September 2018 and had now worked through a series of programmes to achieve the Silver award. The award recognised the Service's approach to Occupational Health and the expansion of the work of the Occupational Health team. The 'know your numbers' campaign, which incorporated a full health check for all employees, had been successful throughout the year.

Feedback from the assessing body was being considered and a gap analysis was being undertaken with a view to working towards the Gold Award in the future.

Councillor Butler referred to the 'know your numbers' campaign and queried if this could be extended to include mental and emotional wellbeing.

The Human Resources Manager advised that the HSE toolkit was employed if an individual was reporting mental health issues but the team could look at building something in to the campaign for the future. It was also highlighted that the Service operated various Mental Health campaigns and part of the pathway to achieving the Gold Award was around building on Mental Health capabilities. The Human Resources Manager said that the team were being trained for Mental Health First Aid and they would then be able to train others.

Councillor Taylor asked if the Service carried out routine health surveillance and the Human Resources Manager advised that the fitness of firefighters was tested on a regular basis as this was a mandated procedure. Work had been undertaken with sedentary workers in the Service and there were initiatives such as boot camps, walking groups and Pilates. The 'know your numbers' campaign had been successful in reducing some absence and staff members could also be referred to their own GP through this initiative.

Councillor Woodwark commented that all of the work generated information which was of use to the organisation and asked how that would be used. The Human Resources Manager stated that the organisation looked at the outputs, such as were staff being retained, if proactive approaches were being taken to preventing sickness absence and were employees engaged and happy and healthy at work.

Having considered the report, it was: -

13. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;

- (ii) the issuing of a congratulatory message to staff involved be endorsed;
and
- (iii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Occupational Health Unit Annual Report 2018/2019

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority) and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing a summary of the services provided by Occupational Health over the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Human Resources Manager highlighted that there would a lot more statistical information provided within the report going forward and the service continued to incorporate a biopsychosocial approach to health and wellbeing. The core services provided by the Occupational Health Unit included Health Surveillance, Fitness for Work screening, attendance management, welfare and health promotion and wellbeing. Occupational Health also provided referrals to physiotherapy services and aids to vision.

Occupational Health team members were currently studying towards Part 3 Qualifications in Occupational Health Management which would enable the team to be further enhanced and developed. The team had a programme of continuous improvement for 2019/2020 which would include: -

- prepare and achieve the Gold Better Health at Work Award (September 2020);
- review services provided and ensure that they were delivered in the most appropriate and cost effective way to meet the changing needs of the organisation;
- rebranding of Occupational Health to Health and Wellbeing;
- training of the Occupational Health and Welfare Managers to become instructors to deliver Mental Health First Aid training to the workforce over a planned three year period;
- continuing professional development for Occupational Health Advisors to meet professional requirements and competencies; and
- improve collaborative working with internal and external sources to assist in meeting the changing needs of the organisation and improving the health and wellbeing of employees.

Councillor Butler asked how outcomes were measured and how levels of success from interventions were known. The Human Resources Manager stated that through absence rates it could be seen whether staff were being retained effectively and a customer survey was carried out.

Councillor Butler went on to enquire if occupational health services were run predominantly in house and what the criteria were for the physiotherapy contract. The Human Resources Manager confirmed that the Occupational Health Unit was on site; efforts were made to refer employees in advance of long, reoccurring injuries developing. Year on year there had been a decrease in referrals to physiotherapy as more people were accessing NHS services. The support of the Jubilee House

rehabilitation facility was also available.

The Chair asked if feedback was obtained from service users, including the County Durham and Darlington fire service as this was further evidence of collaboration. The Human Resources Manager confirmed that full evaluations were carried out of the service and there was an IRMP action to look at the possibility of a regional Occupational Health Unit.

Having considered the report, it was: -

14. RESOLVED that: -

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

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Annual Report to Members

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 the Committee with an update on the arrangements made by the Service to ensure compliance with the statutory provisions governing 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 and the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service was therefore required to work within the framework of the Act.

Following an inspection of the Authority's RIPA Policy and Procedures in 2016, an action plan was developed and it was agreed that an annual report would be presented to Members setting out all RIPA activity and inactivity.

It was confirmed that during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, no requests were received for the use of the Authority's powers under RIPA and therefore no authorisations or refusals had taken place.

Councillor Butler asked if it was envisaged it would be employees who were the subject of any surveillance. ACO Baines said that this could be the case but it could also be used in relation to Fire Safety in businesses, however the powers had only been used, from memory, on one occasion around ten years ago.

15. RESOLVED that: -

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

Annual Report of the Local Pensions Board

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a report presenting the Annual Report of the Local Pension Board to the Committee.

The Local Pension Board assisted the Fire and Rescue Authority in its role as Scheme Manager of the Fire Fighters Pension Scheme. The Board ensured compliance with Regulations and effective and efficient governance of the Scheme. The Board was not a decision making body but was able to make recommendations to the Human Resources Committee.

The Local Pension Board was made up of six members, three Employer representatives and three Employee Representatives and the Chair rotated between the Employer and Employee sides.

During the year, the Local Pension Board had been involved in: -

- reviewing and revising the Discretions of the Firefighter Pension Schemes;
- producing an Overpayment Recovery Policy for Firefighter Pensions;
- creating communications for employees with regard to Annual Allowances; and
- assisting in reviewing and recommending a policy for Voluntary Scheme Pays.

Detailed training was made available for all new Pension Board members and they also benefitted from attending the LGA Pension Conference.

The Chair asked if it would be appropriate for members of the Human Resources Committee to have pension training and the Strategic Finance Manager stated that there was nothing to prevent this and that invitations to the conference had been broadened out this year. This would be looked at and appropriate training offered to the Committee Members.

The work being done to identify and report the entitlement of 'Split Pension' was highlighted by the Chair and the Strategic Finance Manager advised that the 'split' was for the benefit of the employee and protected elements of the pension if they reverted back to a different pension arrangement.

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

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

17. 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

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.