

Item 3 (iv)

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

**Minutes of the Meeting held Remotely on Monday 20 July 2020 at 10.30am in
via Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Councillor Haley in the Chair.

Councillors Butler, Pickard, Stephenson, Taylor and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Flynn.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

28. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 3 February 2020 Part I, be confirmed as a correct record.

Coronavirus – Overview of Workforce Impacts

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with a brief overview of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the Services workforce, since the last meeting of the Committee in February 2020.

The HR Director presented the report and in doing so explained that the local impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) staff had been extensive. The service had expanded its contribution to the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum through staff and volunteers who had responded to new needs arising from the pandemic. The report focused on staff health and wellbeing; communications and engagement, ways of working, business continuity, business improvement; health and safety and additional functions.

Members' attention was drawn to section 3 which provided an overview of staff absence throughout the pandemic, which had been monitored daily and reported to the Executive Leadership Team and the National Resilience Team. They noted that the highest level of absence occurred on 6 May 2020 with 56 employees off sick and the lowest level of absence on 1 July 2020 when 31 employees were absent. The national reporting had reduced to three times per week since 1 June 2020 and overall absence levels during May and June were the lowest than in recent years, the reasons for which are being explored.

In terms of communications and engagement, Members were advised that business had continued with the rapid deployment of the Microsoft Teams application to all employees. A new Covid-19 Portal was launched in early April 2020 which had given employees access to essential information and messages at any time. All managers had maintained regular contact with their staff to ensure their wellbeing and maintained productivity.

The HR Director referred to section 3.14 and reported that the Technical Services Centre staff had recently returned to full capacity. The health and safety of employees had been at the forefront of the management of the pandemic and risk assessments had been produced for every type of work and workplace in line with changing guidance.

Councillor Stephenson commented on the dedication of staff at all levels and the commitment of retired fire fighters and service staff who had supported the service during the pandemic for the residents of Tyne and Wear. She noted the unprecedented expansion of roles of firefighters who had performed additional functions for a temporary period to support other organisations. Business continuity had been successful due to staff and members embracing technology and the new way of working. The Fire service had delivered for vulnerable people and continued to put safety measures in place and continue with routine work for the protection of the community and safe lives. She commended the service and stated she was proud to be a member of the committee.

Councillor Butler agreed with Councillor Stephenson's statement. He commented in particular about the commitment and value of the service of past employees who had returned to offer support. Councillor Pickard added that dedication shown by past and present staff had highlighted how much the Fire Service is relied upon to deliver services and thanked all staff, past and present. It was noted by Councillor Woodward that prior to lockdown the CFO had suggested the pandemic could have a devastating attack on the ability of the Fire Service to undertake duties however the service had adapted and underpinned support for other services, leading to some level of preparedness in the event of a second spike in the winter. ACFO

Baines confirmed that the Service would respond to a second spike and the new ways of working would drive the next 3-5 years.

Having considered the report, the Chair asked if the expanded roles would be extended. The HR Director replied that he had received no formal confirmation about the future of the temporary national and local agreements, however was of the opinion that some of the temporary arrangements might be extended.

29 RESOLVED that:

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

Firefighter Recruitment

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to update Members on progress and future plans relating to Firefighter recruitment initiatives.

ACFO Baines provided an overview of the report which included the recruitment campaign for whole time trainees. Members noted the number of Trainee Firefighters who had successfully passed the course since 2018, the latest cohort having undertaken their training in a socially distanced design format and the anticipated cohort of 24 due to commence in September 2020.

With regard to the Inter Service Transfers (IST) a further advertisement for Firefighters and Crew Managers was published in June 2020. Following the initial selection process, 10 out of 19 applicants had been invited for assessment during July and those being successful would commence their induction training in September 2020.

Councillor Stephenson was pleased with the future plans as outlined in the report and was delighted to see trainees passing out July 2020. This was endorsed by Councillor Woodwark who then went on to ask about the implications of interservice transfers on diversity of the service. ACFO Baines replied that the recruitment process for Inter Service Transfers was tailored to ensure diversity and inclusion and helped to bring additional skills and expertise from other jobs. The previous challenges of diversifying the workforce were acknowledged, however the Chair commented that the bringing in of small cohorts over time would change the diversity of the service and bring in experience. He suggested this could be included in the Annual Workforce Survey. AFCO Baines confirmed he was working on a report.

30 RESOLVED that:

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

Performance Development Review (PDR) Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report updating Members on the progress of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process.

The HR Director brought Members' attention to section 3 of the report which provided an overview of the approach and progress to PDR build and roll out. The Talent module of Core HR had been used to undertake the mapping process during the PDR pilot which had been tested with a cross section of employees. The TWFRS Leadership Bond behaviour framework had provided the foundation and expectation for individuals with the option to use a 360⁰ assessment to gain a deeper insight. The Organisational Development (OD) Team had designed a series of workshops to share good practice and to identify potential issues on implementation. Supervisory managers would be supported throughout the annual PDR cycle. The OD Team would continuously evaluate, reflect and identify improvements throughout the duration of the project to ensure it is carried out effectively and feedback used to ensure continuous improvement.

ACFO Baines referred to the evolution to drive forward effective performance conversations and that the OD team had introduced an excellent system which was much easier to facilitate quality conversations.

Councillor Woodward was pleased with the process outlined and hoped it would lead to employees feeling valued.

31 RESOLVED

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

Information Governance Annual Report 2019/20

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with an overview of the activities relating to the Information Governance (IG) over the 2019/20 fiscal year.

The role of the IG Advisor sits within the Risk and Information function and incorporates the role of Data Protection Officer (DPO), which reports directly to the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), a reference held by the Assistant Chief Officer for Organisational Development. Compliance against the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was audited by Sunderland City Council during Q3 2019/20 and a 'Moderate' level of assurance was awarded. The audit identified several areas for improvement all of which had been completed, they included:

- The introduction of a planned schedule of compliance checks across departments/locations
- The recording of outcomes against the above compliance checks

- Regular meetings between the DPO and SIRO supported by an agenda and action log
- Completion of Data Protection training, in the form of a Redkite E-learning package, by all TWFRS employees. A new E-Learning package had been created and the IG Advisor provided input during new staff inductions – (Partially complete)
- Regular communication to employees on any updates regarding GDPR, which was communicated via the Quarterly Risk Bulletin

TWFRS previously had an Information Asset Register (IAR) which was held on SharePoint, however this had been refreshed and updated. A new, simplified template had been designed, with guidance on completion from the IG Advisor and one-to-one support offered to all Heads of Department for completion.

The Service had received a total of 124 FOI requests during 2019/20 (120 received in 2018/19). The most common sources of FOI requests were members of the public, journalists and enquiries related to contractual arrangements. 74% (2) were responded to within the 20 day requirement and the remaining 26% (32) required further clarification and were answered within a communicated extended time limit.

There had been 14 SAR in 2019/2020 from eight individuals and a training course had been identified which key staff had attended to enhance knowledge of this area in view of the increase in the number of SAR received. The Service achieved 86% compliance against the ICO guidance of one calendar month. Two SARs required extensions due to the size and complexity of the request. There was dispute over the delivery of one request, which had now been reissued and delivered to the requester

The Chair referred to financial implications and commented that responding to requests must have financial implications relating to staff time and should be highlighted. ACFO advised that it was included in the budget however if the SAR requests increased there would be financial implications.

32. RESOLVED that: -

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

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Annual Report

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with an annual update following the 2016 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 the covert surveillance.

The Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services must work within the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) with regard to the authorisation of Directed Surveillance and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources and the Obtaining of Communications Data outside of urgency provisions.

Further to an inspection of the Authority's RIPA Policy and Procedures by 2016, it was agreed that an Annual Report of all RIPA activity and inactivity would be received by the Committee. It was confirmed that within the period 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, no requests were received for the use of the Authority's powers under RIPA and therefore no authorisations or refusals had taken place.

33. RESOLVED that:

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

Executive Leadership Team External Appointments

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), Finance Director and Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the external appointments undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

The undertaking of paid external positions or appointments by officers of the Authority was regulated by standing orders and the delegation scheme and approval for such appointments was entirely at the discretion of the Authority. Unpaid posts were not regulated by the Authority and could be undertaken by an individual whilst operating within FRS policy. To support transparency, Members were provided with the following detail for information only.

- Chief Fire Officer Chris Lowther is a Member of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Chair of the NFCC Operations Coordination Committee (OCC), Member of the NFCC Community Risk Programme Board, NFCC Steering Group and NFCC Counter Terrorism Strategic Board. In addition, he is Chair and Board Member of the Together for Children Touchstone Group Sunderland, Trustee of the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) and Member of the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit Strategic Board. All of these appointments are unpaid.
- Assistant Chief Officer Peter Heath is the Regional Representative of the NFCC OCC, NFCC Lead on COVID-19, NFCC Representative of the Scientific Advisory Cell and Project Executive for the NFCC Learning Materials project. In addition, he is a Member of the Edinburgh Napier University Professional Advisory Group for the Human Resource Master's Degree Programme. All of these appointments are unpaid.
- Assistant Chief Officer John Baines is Vice Chair and Regional Representative of the NFCC National Operational Effectiveness Working Group (NOEWG), Member of the Common Purpose Advisory Board, Trustee of the Fire Fighters Charity and Board Member (Director) of the Cardinal Hume Digital Hub. All of these appointments are unpaid.
- Assistant Chief Officer Lynsey McVay is an Executive Member of Women in the Fire Service (WFS) and NFCC national Lead for Respiratory

Protection Equipment (RPE), the NFCC Representative on the PH4 group working on national respiratory protection standards for industry, she is also a member of the Fires in Tall Buildings (FITB) working group. All of these appointments are unpaid.

- Area Manager Phil Clark is Co-Chair of the NFCC Research and Development Function, Regional Representative of the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Program (ESMCP) Fire Customer Group, Member of the NFCC Community Risk Programme Board, Chair of Welfare for TWFRS Sports and Welfare Club and a Local Authority School Governor at St John Vianney Primary School, Newcastle. All of these appointments are unpaid.
- Area Manager Richie Rickaby is a Member of the Liberty Project Strategic Board for Modern Day Slavery and a Mentor with the Boys Network.
- Area Manager Tony Markwell is Regional Co-ordinator for the North East Region for the Fire Fighters Charity, Regional Representative for the National Operational Guidance Forum and Chair of the Regional Operational Guidance Forum. All of these appointments are unpaid.
- Human Resources Director John Rawling is an elected Public Governor of the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust. This appointment is unpaid.

34. RESOLVED that:

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

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

35. 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

