



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 14 November 2014

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Birkenshaw

Present: Councillor G Thornton (in the chair), K Akthar, C Burke, R Grahame, P Harrand, J Hughes (as substitute for Councillor T Hanley), A Hussain, M Shaw, B Smith, A Taylor and G Wilkinson

In Attendance: None

Apologies: Councillor T Hanley

18 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Committee at a meeting held on 5 September 2014 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

19 Urgent items

None.

20 Admission of the public

There were no items which required the exclusion of the public and press.

21 Declarations of interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made in any matter under consideration at the meeting.

22 Human Resources Activity Report

The Director of Service Support provided a report to inform Members of the Authority's key areas relating to Human Resources to the end of September 2014 together with the annual reporting of the age profile of the wholetime operational workforce.

It had been recognised that the 2014 – 15 sickness target was likely to be exceeded and Members were advised that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken with other Metropolitan Fire Authorities and also with the national Fire Service average. At the end of 2013 – 14 West Yorkshire sickness levels for operational staff were recorded at 5.61 days per employee compared with the Metropolitan Fire Authority average of 6.04. The national average was reported to have been 7.25.

Members were advised that, at the year end, it was likely that West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue sickness levels (operational and Green Book) would be an average of 7.2 days per employee which comprised predominantly of long-term certificated leave with the following recorded causes;

- 34% musculo-skeletal
- 20% mental health
- 11% gastro-intestinal
- 6% respiratory
- 29% other causes

In response to a Member's question about action and remedies, it was reported that a number of options had been utilised as follows;

- Application of the Welfare Policy (including counselling, physiotherapy and enhanced staff training for stress-related absences etc)
- Revision of the Absence and Attendance Policy – closer analysis by relevant personnel of causes of sickness
- Application of the Fitness at Work Policy which focused on prevention and would be revised as required in line with the outcome of the national Firefit Review
- Introduction of a regular stress survey
- Coaching and mentoring schemes
- Implementation of the smoke-free workplace policy
- Employee engagement work, and
- Health screening (offered to all employees)

Concern was also raised at the age profile of the wholetime operational workforce which, by the year 2020, would not include any personnel under the age of 30. Members were advised that wholetime recruitment had stopped in 2009 and the resulting impact had been recognised as an area for further consideration. The age profile of the Retained Firefighters (RDS) was different and recruitment in this area continued with a particular focus on women and BME members of the community. Members were advised that the current RDS recruitment drive had resulted 9 – 10% of the total expressions of interest coming from females.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That the amendment to the establishment be approved;
- c) That the Executive Committee be requested to consider stress-related absence as the subject for a scrutiny review; and

- d) That a copy of the staff stress survey be submitted as part of the scrutiny review process prior to its circulation to all employees.

23 Increase in establishment – Property Unit

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which sought approval for an increase in establishment of the Property Unit in respect of a Health and Safety / Clerk of Works post for refurbishment, repair and maintenance work on Fire Authority premises.

The Unit had an increased workload related directly to the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) new-build / refurbishment programme. As a result, it had been reported in the ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Health and Safety audit report that there were some areas for improvement identified in the supervision of contractors in respect of the regular / annual repair and maintenance programme. Internal Audit had also highlighted areas for improvement with regard to Value for Money.

Members were advised that it was proposed to resolve the issue with a new Health and Safety / Clerk of Works post which would also be responsible for health and safety property issues, revising risk assessments, method statements and carrying out random spot checks on contractors with a clear focus on quality control and best value assurance.

Members were advised that the full year cost of the post would be £35,000 for which no provision had been made in the current approved revenue budget. It was proposed to be funded through an underspending in the salaries budget for 2014 / 15 and thereafter be included in the annual revenue budget.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to increase the establishment of the Property Unit by one Grade 9 post, Health and Safety / Clerk of Works, to assist with the Authority's annual repair and maintenance programme.

24 Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 : Proposals for new governance arrangements

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which set out detail of a consultation about the Firefighters' Pension Scheme governance arrangements which included the establishment of the following;

- a national Scheme Advisory Board, and
- a Local Pension Board

Members were invited to consider the proposed response to the consultation and detail of the proposed constitution and role of the Local Pension Board which would be established by the Fire Authority.

It was further reported that there remained some uncertainty about funding arrangements for the Local Pension Board (expenses, specialist professional advice etc) and also of the national Scheme Advisory Board which, it was proposed, would be funded by the individual local Scheme Managers (in this case, the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority).

RESOLVED

- a) That the consultation response as detailed in the report now submitted be approved;

- b) That the necessary arrangements be put in place for the establishment of a Local Pension Board prior to the regulations coming into force on 1 April 2015; and
- c) That a report be submitted to the January 2015 meeting of this Committee with the proposed constitution of the Board referred to at b) above and detail of arrangements for the training and support of Board members.

25 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2014 : better governance and improved accountability

Members received a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of the receipt of a consultation on draft regulations which amended the 2014 regulations for the governance of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

It was reported that a Local Pension Board would be established and managed by the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) as opposed to individual constituent authorities. The system would operate on a similar basis to that proposed for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (Min no. 24 refers). Members were advised that officers would liaise with the WYPF in relation to the consultation response.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

Chair