

WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 APRIL 2013 AT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, BIRKENSHAW,

Present: Councillors G Thornton (in the Chair); R Grahame, D Gray, L Holmes, S Hamilton, M Khan, K Renshaw, A Taylor, C Townsley and A Wallis (as substitute for Councillor A Wainwright)

Apologies: Councillor A Wainwright

28 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Committee at a meeting held on 18 January 2013 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

29 URGENT ITEM

None.

30 ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

31 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of disclosable pecuniary interest were made in any matter under discussion at the meeting.

32 FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW - UPDATE

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which updated Members on the outcomes of the Fundamental Review as at 31 March 2013.

Members were advised that significant changes to the number of employees had been made since the issue was last reported as follows;

- Number of employees downgraded reduced from 24 to 21

- Number of employees who had left on compulsory redundancy reduced from 22 to 13 (due to filling of vacancies created by employees leaving the Authority)

It was further reported that, following completion of the internal recruitment process, four posts remained unfilled for which Management Board had given approval for external advertisement.

The cost of implementation of the review in 2012 / 13 totalled £1.4m including severance payments and pension costs which would generate salary savings of £1.8m in 2013 / 14 – these costs had been offset by salary savings from October 2012. Once the review had been fully implemented it was expected that the associated savings would rise to £2.5m.

Members were advised that support and assistance was being provided by the Occupational Health Unit to those employees for whom anxiety (brought about by the recent changes) had impacted on their health. A workload assessment was being carried out and would be kept under review.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

33 INCIDENT COMMAND QUALIFICATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of four levels of Incident Command qualifications.

West Yorkshire had achieved accreditation to become a Skills for Justice Approved Centre and was not able to award the Incident Command Qualifications. Levels 1 and 2 of the qualification would be delivered with effect from 11 April 2013.

Members were advised that any costs arising from the provision of the training would be met from within existing budgetary provision.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

34 NORMAL PENSIONABLE AGE – FITNESS AND HEALTH ISSUES

Members considered a report of the Director of Service Support which set out the finding and recommendations arising from the review led by Dr Anthony Williams into the fitness and health related issues linked to the review of the normal pensionable age.

The review had been undertaken on behalf of the Firefighters' Pension Committee

and aimed to be in a position to estimate the numbers of staff likely to be aerobically fit at Normal Pensionable Age (NPA).

Members were advised that the review had concluded that a significant number of firefighters would have difficulty in maintaining fitness beyond the age of 55, a larger proportion of whom would be female firefighters. It further recommended that a reasonable way to manage expectations would be to allow firefighters to leave after the age of 55 on a pension that had been actuarially reduced from age 60 without any additional penalty. The review did not make any specific recommendation as to what the NPA should be.

The findings of the Firefighters' Pension Committee into the Review had yet to be published.

Members were concerned that this issue may have been addressed elsewhere in Europe and queried what other blue light emergency services would be doing with the recommendations. It was acknowledged that there may have to be some future discussion related to 'reasonable adjustments' should a firefighter become operationally unfit before the scheduled retirement age.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That Members be kept informed of any future progress with the recommendations of the review as appropriate and such report to include information on the reaction of the other blue light emergency services.

35 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which updated Members about changes to the Training and Development Framework which had been simplified and amalgamated into one single Framework for both green book and grey book employees with a view to ensuring equality of opportunity and future gap analysis of training need.

Members were advised that, where appropriate, e-learning had been used which had reduced the need to attend courses and so the need for Operational Resource Pool cover had, similarly, been reduced.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

36 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY – PROGRESS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which

provided an update on how West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service would ensure it continued to meet the legal requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty which was currently under Government review.

Members were advised in the report of the various methods in which the Authority ensured that equality was considered in the delivery of its day-to-day business activities.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That the Government review findings be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

37 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS) – RECRUITMENT

Members received a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of the recruitment campaign that had commenced for Retained Duty System (RDS) stations.

The approved IRMP 2013 – 2020 included the recommendation to increase the amount of time fire stations operating the RDS system were available to respond to incidents. Members were advised that, currently, all the RDS stations had vacancies for firefighters totalling 26. Members were advised that, to date, applications for a RDS post had been received from 12 wholetime firefighters. Recruitment from outside the Fire Service would require the establishment of bespoke training packages to ensure that training matched the availability of each individual.

It was reported that the 2013 – 14 budget included provision of £0.25m to cover the cost of recruitment, training and additional salary costs in the year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

38 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 March 2013. The report also sought approval for the reported establishment reduction of 44 wholetime firefighter posts (resulting from the approved IRMP changes already implemented) and detailed sickness figures on a departmental basis.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and

- (ii) That the amendments to the establishment be approved.

39 JOINT CONTROL ROOM PROJECT - STAFFING

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which advised of the collective agreement which had been reached with the representative bodies regarding a proposed new structure and establishment for the new Joint Control Room project. A copy of the agreed Control Duty System Policy was attached as an annex to the report now submitted.

Members were advised that the new system would be introduced to coincide with the implementation of the new Command and Control System in 2014.

The number of posts would be reduced from 51 to 42 and staff had been circulated with at risk letters seeking expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy and other revised working time options (flexible retirement, job share, part time working). It was reported that, to date, more than the required 9 requests for voluntary redundancy had been received.

Members discussed the implementation of the 6% proposed flexi team allowance and how this might be managed and aligned to similar schemes already operating within the service.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the revised staffing structure for Control be approved as detailed in the report now submitted;
- (ii) That the Control Duty System Policy be approved; and
- (iii) That the revised structure as approved at (i) above be implemented in conjunction with the new Command and Control system.

Chair