



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 05 July 2013

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Birkenshaw

Present: Councillors G Thornton (in the Chair), P Caffrey, R Grahame, J Hardy, M Harland, L Holmes, B Smith (as substitute for Councillor M Khan), A Taylor, C Townsley (as substitute for Councillor C Burke) and A Wallis (as substitute for Councillor A Wainwright)

In Attendance: N/A

Apologies: Councillors C Burke, M Khan, A Wainwright and G Wilkinson

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Committee at a meeting held on 12 April 2013 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2 URGENT ITEMS

None.

3 ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

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

5 GREY BOOK PAY SETTLEMENT

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which advised Members of the 1% pay settlement announced on 4 June 2013 and associated amendments to the Conditions of Service for operational firefighters, control operators and retained firefighters.

It was reported that the across the board 1% pay increase would be complemented by changes to the payments of essential and casual user mileage rates which would be revised and linked to approved HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) rates. Implementation of the rates would be phased in between 1 July 2013 and 1 April 2014.

Members were advised that provision for the pay settlement had been included in the 2013 / 14 budget and mileage costs would be reduced under the revised payments system with a projected saving of £32,000 in the current year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

6 FIREFIGHTERS' PENSIONS – AUTO-ENROLMENT

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which informed Members of the arrangements and new regulations relating to workplace pensions and auto-enrolment.

It was reported that the Authority's staging date would be 1 September 2013 when eligible workers (currently 165 employees) would be automatically enrolled into the qualifying workplace pension scheme. Employees who subsequently chose to opt out would be automatically re-enrolled every three years.

Due to the relatively small numbers of personnel involved, Members were advised that the financial impact on the Authority would be limited although there would be a small cost in terms of the additional administrative burden.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7 PENSIONS REVIEW – OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of consultation responses to amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (1992) and the new Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2006). Amendments orders had been enacted on 1 July 2013.

Further work had yet to be undertaken before the final impact on the Authority would be fully known and it was reported that a number of issues remained outstanding including a ruling on exemptions from payment of pension contributions for which a Court declaration was awaited.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) That a further report be submitted to the Human Resources Committee detailing the full implications and impact of the Amendment Orders 2013 on the Fire Authority.

8 FIREFIT

Members considered a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of the ongoing national research into firefighter fitness together with an overview of the Authority's fitness policy.

Members were advised that there had been two recommendations arising from the Williams report as follows;

- the introduction of nationally agreed standards, and
- the collation of data on fitness and ill-health retirements

As far as fitness was concerned in West Yorkshire, gym based tests were undertaken on a two-yearly basis for all firefighters with an operational role. The latest results from the tests revealed that 3.59% of candidates had been issued with an improvement plan and 0.2% (3 firefighters) had failed. In this instance, it was reported that support would be given for the firefighter to reach the required standard and one of the three who had failed, had since returned to work.

It was further reported that there were different approaches to fitness-related issues by other blue light agencies. Members were briefed as to what these arrangements were.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY – GOVERNMENT REVIEW UPDATE

The Director of Service Support updated Members on the Government's review of the Public Sector Equality Duty which had been introduced under the Equality Act 2010. It was reported that Government had suggested that the Duty may impose an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on public authorities and had, therefore, initiated the review.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee advising of the final outcome of the Public Sector Equality Duty review.

10 CORPORATE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN AND OBJECTIVES

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which presented the 2013 – 14 Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan which had been produced in compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Members were advised that the document was produced by this Authority on an annual basis and was linked with the Authority's Service Plan. A copy of the Plan was attached as an annex to the report now submitted.

With specific reference to the implementation of the Home Fire Safety Strategy across the County, it was reported that the focus was on the vulnerability of the occupier rather than the dwelling types such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and data would continue to be collected about the local community and its changing needs.

RESOLVED

- a) That the 2013 – 14 Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan be approved; and
- b) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the implementation of the plan.

11 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 May 2013 and of sickness absence figures for the three-year period April 2010 – March 2013.

Members were advised that the sickness absence figures had been affected as a result of the fundamental review in 2012 – 13 but it was reported that this appeared now to be back on track. This had been particularly relevant to the staff in Prevention and Protection which had been impacted upon to a large extent as a result of the review. The departmental sickness absence figures had improved dramatically from April 2013.

It was further reported that there had been a reduction in the establishment figures of 20 posts following implementation of various elements of the Integrated Risk Management Plan approved at the December 2012 meeting of the full Authority.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) That the amendments to the establishment be approved.

12 PENSIONABLE PAYMENTS

Members received a report of the Director of Service Support which advised on the implications of the recent High Court ruling on pensionable payments.

The case Norman v Cheshire related to changed or additional duties which were, or were not, pensionable.

Members were advised that a review of all additional payments in West Yorkshire had been undertaken. Details of the outcome of the review were listed at paragraph 2.2 of the report now submitted.

There would be a requirement to recover underpaid contributions from both employer and employee and it was reported that 249 employees would be affected by the ruling, including 67 retirees. The impact of future liabilities needed to be identified and a strategy determined in mitigation.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) That approval be given to a phased approach to addressing the implications of the Norman v Cheshire pensionable pay ruling.

Chair