



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 27 March 2015

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, A Hussain, J Pryor, M Shaw, B Smith and G Wilkinson

In Attendance: None

Apologies: None

35 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 23 January 2015 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

36 Urgent items

None.

37 Admission of the public

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

38 Declarations of interest

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

39 Firefighters' Pension Scheme – workstream update

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which advised of the current position with regard to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme(s) and relevant associated workstreams as follows;

- Pensionable pay project (implications of the Norman v. Cheshire High Court case)
- Retained modified pension scheme – 170 affected current and former retained firefighters have requested further information
- Firefighter's Pension Scheme 2015 – transfers into the scheme to be made with effect from 1.4.15
- Repayment of pension contributions lost due to strike action

It was reported that a temporary 18-month appointment of a Grade 6 administrator had been approved by Management Board to assist with the increased workload in the Human Resources department associated with pension issues.

The Chief Finance and Procurement Officer provided a brief assessment of the implications of the changes in pension contributions on the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

40 Day Crewing Close Call – changes to establishment

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which sought approval for the reduction of one firefighter post at South Kirkby (Day Crewing Close Call station).

Members were advised that the original Day Crewed Close Call system had been established within a set budgetary constraint and the implications of the Norman v. Cheshire case had had a financial impact on the system insofar as extra payments had become pensionable. The Authority now found itself in a position whereby it had to pay increased employer contributions.

The increased financial burden on the Authority for the day crewed system, coupled with a revision to the operation of the system with a move to a "cluster" arrangement to allow greater flexibility in the use and movement of staff, had led to a proposed reduction of one post. The post would be lost through natural wastage at South Kirkby reducing the staffing level from 13 to 12 posts. Members sought detailed clarification of the operation of the "cluster" system and were reassured that staffing and cover levels remained appropriate and fit for purpose.

RESOLVED

That the establishment at South Kirkby be reduced by one Firefighter post down to an overall establishment of twelve.

41 Human Resources Activity Report

Members considered a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of changes to the establishment and strength of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (including that approved a Min no. 40) together with departmental / directorate sickness levels on a comparative basis from 1 April 2012 to the end of December 2014. It was anticipated that the end of year average sickness figure would be 1.4 days above what had been a very challenging target.

Members commented and were advised in greater detail on the following;

- causes for sickness – work and non-work related
- stress related absence and managerial response and support

RESOLVED

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

42 Public Sector Equality Duty – annual report

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which updated Members on the Authority's compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and actions to improve its performance in respect of equality and diversity.

Members were advised of areas for improvement which had been identified throughout the course of the year which were set against a background of significant organisational change and employee relations challenges.

One of the specific duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty was the requirement to publish equality objectives at least every four years. The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority had published these annually in support the delivery of the annual Service Action Plan but, following a self-assessment exercise of equality performance in 2014, it was noted that the Authority had found itself in a position whereby a situation had been created where two equality action plans had been developed and in operation which had no clearly defined links to the Authority's Strategic Priorities.

It was proposed, therefore, that a new approach be adopted (detailed at Annex 2 to the report now submitted) which included the development of one (self-assessment) equality action plan plus relevant equality analyses. These would lead to the introduction of a three-year equality action plan and link to the Authority's Annual Service Plan Action Plan.

Consideration was also given to a selection of activities focused on service delivery as follows;

- Football scheme to tackle anti-social bonfire behaviour in Harehills, Leeds
- Partnership activities focused on reducing deliberate fire-setting in North East Halifax
- Fire awareness training to local authority and blue-light partners

Members commented that, in future, they hoped to see the focused activities being targeted on those areas or community groups whose actions had proved particularly challenging in the previous 12-month period. It was reported that this was currently being analysed by an internal working group and the likelihood was that this would be the approach to be adopted in future years.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) That approval be given to the revised approach for the delivery of equality objectives.

43 Employee Engagement

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which updated Members on the work of the Employee Engagement Group.

The Group was focused on possible approaches which would assist in the improvement of strained employee relationships where this had become evident and a level of apparent disengagement with the

organisation that had been borne out of the Fundamental Review and recent periods of industrial action. Many of these approaches would be built upon existing arrangements from which employees currently benefited and which were detailed in the annex to the report now submitted.

Members sought further clarification on the application of the Authority's Homeworking Policy, the level and possible causes of employee disengagement and detail of the final number of compulsory redundancies made following the Fundamental Review.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report and actions taken today in respect of Employee Engagement be noted; and
- b) That the continuation of work in the area of Employee Engagement be endorsed.

44 Shared Parental Leave and Pay

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which advised of arrangements which had been put in place in response to new employment legislation and an entitlement to a maximum of 50 weeks' shared parental leave.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That approval be given to the implementation of the Shared Parental Leave Policy from 5 April 2015 as attached to the report now submitted; and
- c) That implementation of the policy at b) above and its impact on the Authority be reviewed and reported to this Committee after 12 months' operation.

45 Yorkshire and Humber Employers' Organisation (YHEO) – Constitution and operating model

Members considered a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of arrangements following the dissolution of Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) organisation with effect from 31 March 2015.

It was reported that LGYH would retain an Employers' Organisation which would have a separate legal identity and would work under a new operating model and constitution. The Yorkshire and Humber Employers' Organisation (YHEO) would comprise elected Members from 22 District Councils and 4 Fire Authorities, including West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority. Membership would be by subscription and for 2015 / 16 this would equate to £414 with an additional £62 (15%) for subscription to a telephone employment advice line.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That the annual subscription cost for YHEO in 2015 – 16 totalling £476 (£414 annual subscription and £62 for subscription to the 24-hour telephone advice line) be noted, and
- c) That a request be made to Wakefield MDC for receipt of a copy of all relevant Minutes for the Yorkshire and Humber Employers' Organisation and that these be reported to future meetings of this Committee.

46 Women in the Fire Service

Members received a verbal report from the Equality and Diversity Manager which advised of the outcome of a workshop with representatives of the national organisation, "Women in the Fire Service" held in October 2014. The workshop, attended by 20 employee representatives together with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority, debated the following issues;

- Relevant policies and procedures eg flexi working
- Working and duty patterns
- The exit interview process
- The mentoring scheme (for personal development and coaching)
- Recruitment and issues related to the promotion of the Fire Service as an employer within the traditionally, hard to reach communities
- Challenges for those with caring responsibilities
- Transparency and fairness in the recruitment processes
- The possible establishment of an internal Women's Forum

RESOLVED

That the content of the report and proposed action points related to the issues raised during the Women in the Fire Service discussions be noted.

Chair