

## **WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

### **MEETING OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2013 AT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, BIRKENSHAW,**

Present: Councillors G Thornton (in the Chair); C Burke (as substitute for Councillor Townsley), J Dodds (as substitute for Councillor Hamilton), R Grahame, L Holmes, A Hussain (as substitute for Councillor Khan), A Taylor, A Wainwright and G Wilkinson

Apologies: Councillors S Hamilton, M Khan, K Renshaw and C Townsley

#### **18 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – ACO D Walton**

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Mr Dave Walton who had taken up his appointment on 2 January 2013 consequent upon the retirement of his predecessor Martyn Redfearn.

#### **19 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

##### **RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Committee at a meeting held on 2 November 2012 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **20 URGENT ITEM**

None.

#### **21 ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC**

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

#### **22 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Grahame, Holmes and Dodds raised the issue of whether because of their membership of public sector pension schemes they might have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Item 6 (Pension Bill Update - to note) and wished to

declare it if they did. The Monitoring Officer stated that, in his view, they did not have a DPI – this was a noting report only. If a DPI had arisen on a voting matter he would issue a dispensation under delegated powers because of the impact of DPI restrictions on voting balances.

No further disclosures of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

## **23 ACCIDENT INFORMATION 2011 / 12**

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which updated Members on accident data for the period April 2011 – March 2012.

It was reported that the number of accidents during the relevant period (including members of staff and others on West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service sites and those affected by the Service's actions) had reduced over the previous 12-month period by 74 incidents (25%). Members were advised, however, that the trend line indicated that the previous set of figures had been particularly high and the current results were in line with the historic seven year figure and were the lowest to date.

The figures also revealed a significant change to the types of accident occurring and the most serious category had reduced by 51%. 9% of all accidents had occurred to non-employees and 915 working days had been lost by employees. Of particular interest in the Fire Service was the ratio of operational to non-operational employee incidents which stood at 4 : 1 (80% and 20%) – this being broadly comparable to the overall breakdown of the total employee group.

Members sought further information on two specific reportable incidents which were responsible for the increase in the total cost of accidents as compared with 2010 – 11 and briefly discussed the impact on the Authority's insurances.

Officers also provided more detailed information about the issue of airborne contaminants and firefighter safety.

### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

## **24 PENSIONS BILL – UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Support which advised of the progress through the parliamentary stages of the Public Service Pensions Bill.

The Bill would affect a number of schemes of which Authority staff were members. It was reported that the Bill provided for the replacement of the existing public sector final salary schemes with those based on career average earnings together with a number of other features as detailed in the report now submitted.

Proposed changes to the State pension scheme would also impact on the Authority's balances due to increased employer contributions and may lead to a potential annual increase in pension costs of £1.5m.

Members discussed the specific impact of the proposed changes on female firefighters who may not be able to maintain their fitness for a similar length of time as their male counterparts. It was reported that a very recent national study had been completed by Dr Tony Williams, which, it was hoped, would provide expert evidence about physiology and fitness in this respect. It was recognised, however, that female firefighters had only been recruited comparatively recently in West Yorkshire (ca. 20 years ago) and had not, therefore, reached the 30-year service target when fitness and capability would be better understood.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee detailing issues relating to fitness and retirements from the Brigade.

## **25 FIRE SERVICE COLLEGE**

Members considered a report which advised of the developments made to date with regard to the future of the Fire Service College as previously reported in November 2011 and March 2012.

An announcement had been made on 13 December 2012 by the Fire Minister confirming that Capita had been chosen as the preferred bidder for the purchase of the College with an intended completion date of 28 February 2013. Detail of Capita's long-term vision was included in the report now submitted.

It was reported that a revision had been made to the pricing structure and it was anticipated that this may result in West Yorkshire benefiting from a decrease in current course fees.

Members raised concerns about the future viability of the College and relevant safeguarding measures for the Fire Service together with issues related to future spend and the impact of price increases made by the private sector company.

## **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

## **26 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 December 2012. The report also sought approval for the reported establishment reduction of 23 whole-time firefighter posts 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.

## **27 INCREASE IN EMPLOYEE PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS – CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which set out a proposed response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation on employee contribution rates for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. The revisions had been drafted with the aim of delivering £2.8bn savings nationally by 2014 / 15.

## **RESOLVED**

That the proposed responses as detailed in paragraphs 2.3 – 2.6 be approved for submission to Communities and Local Government.

Chair