

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Standards and Human Resources Committee  
held on Tuesday, 26 March 2019, at 2.00 pm in the  
Oak Room at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Adams (Chair), Dee (Vice Chair), Hartin, Hosken, Jones and Murray

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Natalie Parkinson	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDIO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Wynn

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Minutes**

Councillor Hartin abstained from voting, as he was not on the Committee when the previous meeting took place.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 3 December 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**5 Pension Board**

**5a Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 14 February 2019, be noted.

## 5b Annual Report

This report brought the Pension Board Annual Report 2018 to the Standards and Human Resources Committee for information.

The CFO presented this report and informed the Committee that it demonstrates how the Pension Board has grown fully into its role now that supporting structures, such as the Scheme Advisory Board, are in place. The Pension Board now has more guidance about its remit and a clearly defined role, which includes supporting the Pension Scheme Manager in their role.

The CFO advised Members that the changes to the employers' contribution rate would lead to an increase in the Service's budget requirement. Government has indicated it will cover 90% of the increased costs in 2019/20 and the Service has budgeted to meet its contribution. There is lack of certainty about funding after this, but the Government has also indicated the issue will be considered in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Members asked what percentage contribution employees make to the Scheme. The CFO explained that it is between 12 – 16.5 %, which Members considered quite a high level of contribution.

Members asked for further information on the 'transitional protection' appeal, as detailed at bullet point (b) on page 3 of the report. The CFO explained that the Government are seeking to appeal the unlawful discrimination decision as employers. It is unclear at this stage whether compensation will be payable to all those who were moved out of 1992 Pension Scheme. Those employees who had 10 years or less until pension age stayed in the '92 Scheme whilst for those with between 10 – 15 years until pension age there was a tapered transfer. It is uncertain whether any compensation will relate to just those who were tapered or to all in the '92 Scheme. The ACFO reported that there is a relatively small number of affected employees in this Service.

Members asked if membership of the Pension Scheme was mandatory. The CFO explained that it was not. There is auto-enrolment into the Pension Scheme but employees can opt out of the Scheme if they so wish.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the Pension Board Annual Report 2018, as attached at the Appendix to the report.

## 6 Committee Constitution

This report asked Members to consider the Terms of Reference of the Standards and Human Resources Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

**Resolved** that the Committee has reviewed its Terms of Reference, as set out at the Appendix to the report, and do not make any amendments to the Fire Authority for agreement.

## 7 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standards and Human Resources Committee and the Role Description and Skills and Competencies for the Fire Authority's Independent Person.

**Resolved** that the Committee has reviewed the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standards and Human Resources Committee and the Role Description and Skills and Competencies for the Fire Authority's Independent Person and do not make any amendments to the Fire Authority for agreement.

## 8 Committee Work Plan 2019/20

This report reviewed progress against the 2018/19 Work Plan for the Standards and Human Resources Committee and put forward a 2019/20 Work Plan for the Committee's consideration and approval.

**Resolved** that the Committee has considered the 2019/20 Work Plan, attached at the Appendix to the report, and approve it without amendment.

## 9 Member Development

This report updated the Committee on Member development activity over the past year and proposes training and development activity for the year April 2019 to March 2020.

Members suggested that it might be helpful to have some joint training with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on the Strategic Fire Alliance. The CFO agreed that this was a good idea.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the backward-looking report and agree the proposed training and development activity for the year April 2019 to March 2020, with the inclusion of joint training with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on the Strategic Fire Alliance.

## 10 Code of Conduct Complaints

The Committee noted that, whilst not a legal requirement, it was good practice for Members to receive regular updates on Code of Conduct complaints, even if there had been none. The ESO reported that, during the period 2018/19, the Fire Authority had received no complaints that any of its Members had breached its Code of Conduct

**Resolved** that the Committee note the update regarding Code of Conduct complaints.

## 11 People Strategy End of Year Report

This report provided an update on the changes that have been made to the People Strategy.

The HHRA presented this report and particularly highlighted the progress as detailed at section 5 of the report.

The Committee commented that it was right to regularly review and update the Strategy and that it is important to highlight the progress and development that is being made.

Members asked for further detail around the review of the On-Call application packs and process. The HHRA explained that a national On-Call recruitment campaign has been launched and the Service had benefited from bringing its resources and processes in line with the national approach. Members questioned if a national approach would work due to the individuality of fire services. The CFO explained that it would support the local campaigns with standardised information packs across all stations that still contain relevant local information for employers. The HHRA also explained that work has been undertaken to acknowledge the local employers' help, including the CFO sending Christmas cards to employers.

Members commented that the Medals Ceremony and the Celebration of Success are excellent events, which provide an opportunity to engage with families and help to boost community awareness. It was suggested that more could be done to celebrate anniversaries and events on stations and the CFO said that stations would be encouraged to look for such opportunities.

The CFO commented that the fundamental difference for this Service is its huge reliance on On-Call (Retained Duty System) employees. These employees give a huge amount to the Service and therefore, the Service needs to go the extra mile to recognise this as it is not really reflected in monetary terms.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

## 12 Gender Pay Gap Report

This report explained Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) to publish an annual Gender Pay Gap report and the associated report.

Members commented that they found the way the information was presented in parts of the report was confusing and asked if it could be presented differently in future.

Referring to the salary quartile bands, Councillor Hartin asked what percentage of staff are paid below the real living wage. The HHRA explained all staff are paid above the real living wage and this was in line with a decision made by the Committee at its last meeting. The HHRA undertook to provide more information on payscales to Councillor Hartin.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the 2019 report (for 2018 data) for publishing on the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service website and the Government website: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) .

### **13 Progress on Implementation of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan**

This report updated Members on progress on the main actions identified in the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan from March 2018 to February 2019.

The EDIO presented this report and highlighted many aspects of the work that had been undertaken during the previous year, both within the Service and with external partners.

Members asked for further information regarding the issues with recruitment and retention. The EDIO explained that in certain areas of the county there are a lack of businesses meaning that there are fewer people working in those communities during the day. This creates a struggle to find employers who are able to provide day release of the employees as On-Call firefighters. The HHRA explained that consideration had been given to potentially expanding the response time from five to seven minutes for On-Call staff but the Service would not gain anything in particular by doing this.

Positive action is therefore being undertaken to try to encourage recruitment of women, as they may be more available during the day. The CFO explained that there is also the possibility of moving away from the traditional contract of 120 hours cover per week, which is being affected by demographic changes in living and working patterns. It is possible that different contracts, involving shorter cover could be developed. There is however, a financial impact for Service from this for areas such training and uniform with the on-going cost being challenging even if the contracts can be filled.

Members asked when, or if, the Fire Boot Camp would be run again. The EDIO explained that officers are in the process of costing the Fire Boot Camp to see if it could be run independently but it is not yet clear how this will be taken forward. The CFO commented that it was something that could be used for recruitment; or improve community relations or to make money.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

Councillor Murray left the meeting at this point (3.10 pm)

## 14 Equality Monitoring Statistics

This report provided Members with an overview of the Service's Equality Monitoring Statistics.

The EDIO presented this report and highlighted the ongoing under-reporting of Black and Other Minority Ethnic and lesbian, gay and bisexual within the workforce.

The CFO commented that the reduction in the numbers of 'unknown' responses is a credit to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team and shows the effect of their work.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report and the potential change to reporting date in future years.

## 15 Reasonable Adjustments Update

This report provided Members with an overview of the reasonable adjustments made to support employees in their work roles.

Members asked if it would be possible to provide any figures to show benefits and improvements from reasonable adjustments in relation to the costs as set out on page 3 of the report. The EDIO responded that this was probably not possible as any benefits are not currently correlated and they would be quite hard to measure tangibly.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....