

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee Meeting
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 18 October 2012 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams (Chair), Mrs Barrow (Vice-Chair), Mrs Blundell and Kiernan

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Acting Head of Human Resources, Acting Human Resources Manager, Equality and Diversity Officer, Corporate Services Manager (for items 1 to 8) and Executive Support Officer

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor Kiernan that Councillor Adams be elected Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, it was

Resolved that Councillor Adams be elected Chair to hold office for the ensuing year

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Adams and seconded by Councillor Kiernan that Councillor Mrs Barrow be appointed Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, it was

Resolved that Councillor Mrs Barrow be appointed Vice-Chair to hold office for the ensuing year

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Price, Miss Reynolds and Thompson.

The Corporate Services Manager advised the Committee of a request received from Councillor Miss Reynolds that Members consider holding meetings in the evenings, as she had daytime commitments.

Members discussed the matter but felt that meetings of the Human Resources Committee should continue to commence at 2.00 pm.

In light of this situation Councillor Mrs Barrow suggested that perhaps another Member, who could attend meetings, should be nominated to the Human Resources Committee. The Corporate Services Manager undertook to raise this issue with the Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Dr Jones.

4 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Chair asked whether any Member had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. No Pecuniary Interests were disclosed.

5 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 19 April 2012

Regarding the Equality Monitoring Statistics (at item 14) the Equality and Diversity Officer commented that she was not able to amend the criteria from 'White Irish' to 'White Eire' as this would differ from the census categories.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Adams and

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 19 April 2012, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

6 Public Questions

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

7 Pensions Panel

Members received and noted the non-exempt minutes of the Pensions Panel held on 6 August 2012.

8 Human Resources Committee Constitution and Training

This report brought the latest version of the Committee's constitution to the notice of its Members and asked them to consider whether there was any training or development, which should be undertaken by the Committee in order to fulfil its role.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Mrs Blundell and

Resolved to delay any decision on Member training and development requirements until after the local government elections the following year Officers should, however, discuss with new Members if they had any specific training needs.

The Corporate Services Manager left the meeting at this point (2.18 pm).

9 Operational Staff Pay Settlement 2012-13

This report brought to the attention of the Committee the contents of Circulars EMP/13/12, NJC/05/12 and NJC/05/12, which detailed the 2012 pay settlement for operational staff; firefighters both wholetime and retained duty system; and Fire Control specific roles.

The Chief Fire Officer cited the positive outcome of 'Grey Book' negotiations and the prudence of the Fire Authority, which had allowed the absorption of this pay rise. He has alerted the national negotiating body that proposed changes to casual user mileage rates could have hidden impacts on the Service's employment of retained staff in respect of their annual centralised training and community fire safety commitments. He acknowledged the contribution of non-operational 'Green Book' personnel, whose pay has been frozen since 2009, with the hope that their pay would be subject to review next year.

The Chair enquired about the incremental pay of 'Green Book' personnel. The Acting Head of Human Resources confirmed that this was automatic on passing of the probationary period; any issues of competency were managed through the Service's capability policy.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

Committee Clerk Note

The third Circular was NJC/06/12. This should also have been reflected in the agenda and in the report introduction.

10 Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations Update

This report provided an update to the Committee on the processing of settlement payments being made by the Service, following the conclusion of the long-running employment tribunal cases, brought by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) under the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations.

The Acting Head of Human Resources briefed Members concerning the controversy regarding the tax and national insurance liability of the settlement payments. The Service's Treasurer and Head of Finance had determined in the light of legal advice to gross up payments and for the Service to pay the tax and national insurance.

This approach was queried by the Chair. The Acting Head of Human Resources assured him that the individuals had received the amount, to which they were entitled. In the covering letter, individuals had been advised that, if the tax and national insurance is subsequently refunded to them, they should return the money to the Fire Authority. The individuals receiving payments are those employed since 2000 and include leavers and retirees.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that it remained a matter of legal opinion as to whether the money was an award or a payment. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs were of the view that it was a payment and, therefore, subject to tax.

After discussion, the Chief Fire Officer and the Chair of the Fire Authority have agreed to await the outcome of in-depth, specialist advice sourced by a nearby Service. However, the work undertaken by Popularis (engaged as an independent third party to handle the process of communication between fire and rescue services, the Retained Firefighters Union and individuals) and the expense of the employment tribunals have cost a lot of money and Chairs and Chiefs are challenging why the costs are being borne by fire and rescue services, when they are the result of the previous Government's dealing incorrectly with retained duty system personnel terms and conditions.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

11 Equality and Diversity Steering Group Update

This report provided the Committee with a summary report on the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group from August 2011 to 1 September 2012.

The Chair enquired whether there were plans to hold a 'Bring your Sons to Work' event in addition to 'Bring your daughters to work'. The Equality and Diversity Officer advised that this event had been held as positive action, educating young females between the ages of 14 and 21 years on roles within the Fire and Rescue Service.

Cllr Mrs Barrow highlighted the different style of language used by the participants of 'Bring your Daughters to Work', describing their experience, to that of Service leaflets. She suggested looking to revise language, where appropriate, to aid communication. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he is working with Telford & Wrekin Council with a view to the Service's acting as a corporate parent supporting young people, with them coming in during school holidays. He proposed that this could feed in to making Service literature more accessible to young people.

The Chair commented that in dealing with specific conditions, such as dyslexia, this necessitated the Service being involved with a lot of associated organisations. The Acting Head of Human Resources replied that there were 21 people in the Service with dyslexia and one case of possible dyspraxia. The Equality and Diversity Officer added that the Service has a duty in law to these individuals and that she works with the Head of People Development and Safety to ensure their safety.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

12 Rights and Fairness Telford Progress Report

This report informed the Committee of the progress of Rights and Fairness Telford, as requested by the Fire Authority.

The Equality and Diversity Officer reported that Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT) is now fully operational, having gained the necessary funding. The Fire Authority has not provided any contribution since 2010/11.

The Equality and Diversity Officer explained that RAFT is a useful research source and provider of knowledge on the Telford and Wrekin area. The Service is working with RAFT on its Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual survey, which RAFT is hosting and analysing.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

12a Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum Progress during 2011/12

This report informed the Human Resources Committee of the progress made by the Shropshire Equality and Diversity Forum during 2011/12.

The Equality and Diversity Officer advised that sub-groups of the Forum provide a valuable source of consultation, scrutiny and networking. She is involved with the Equality Awards and the Fire Crime Officer works with the Hate Crime Group.

The Chief Fire Officer also cited a previous opportunity provided through the Forum, where he was able to meet with senior Bangladeshi politicians visiting Telford College. This had enabled him to discuss with them community fire safety work done in partnership with the Police.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

13 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow seconded by Councillor Kiernan and

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded for the following agenda items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12A to The Act, by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3

14 Exempt Minutes

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee, held on 19 April 2012.

It was proposed by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow and

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee, held on 19 April 2012, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

15 Pensions Panel

Members received and noted the exempt minutes of the Pensions Panel, held on 6 August 2012.

The meeting closed at 2.44 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....