

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee
held on Thursday, 7 April 2011 at 2.00 pm
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Mrs Blundell (from 2.10 pm), Hartin (Vice-Chair), Kiernan and Picken

Officers

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Human Resources), Human Resources Manager and Management Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Adams and Price.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 October 2010.

It was proposed by Councillor Picken, seconded by Councillor Kiernan, and with Councillor Barrow abstaining as she was not present at the meeting, it was

Resolved that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 October 2010, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

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

5 Human Resources Committee Work Plan 2011/12

This report sought to establish a Work Plan for the Human Resources Committee for the period April 2011 to April 2012.

It was proposed by Councillor Barrow, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and

Resolved that the Committee approve the Human Resources Committee Work Plan, attached as an appendix to the report, with no amendments being considered necessary.

At this point, Councillor Hartin proposed and the Committee agreed that the order of the agenda be varied so Item 8 – Proposed Delegation to Officers of consideration of Outside Employment Applications was considered before Item 6a – Human Resources Committee Terms of Reference and Item 7 – Role Descriptions for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. This was because the recommendations in Item 8 had a direct impact on the recommendations in Items 6 and 7.

6b Appeals Committee Terms of Reference

This report provided details of the Terms of Reference of the Appeals Committee, as they appear in the Fire Authority's Members' Handbook, for review by this Committee.

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

Resolved the Human Resources Committee have reviewed the Appeals Committee Terms of Reference and agree that no recommendations for change need to be made to the Fire Authority.

8 Proposed Delegation to Officers of consideration of Outside Employment Applications

This report asked Members to consider recommending to the Fire Authority that the process for dealing with requests from staff for permission to undertake outside employment be delegated to Officers, including the decision making.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) explained that delegating consideration to the Human Resources Manager would ensure continuity of decision-making and would save approximately one day of administration time per year.

Councillor Hartin asked if Councillor Adams had expressed any opinion as Chair of the Committee. The ACFO confirmed that Councillor Adams had not expressed any particular opinion.

Councillor Barrow commented that this appeared to be a very sensible suggestion and Councillors Kiernan and Picken agreed with this view.

The ACFO confirmed that the process would provide an effective filter if there were any applications that were unsuitable and also advised that due to the reduction of the frequency of Human Resources Committee meetings, the proposed changes to the process would ensure that staff did not have to wait for up to six months before receiving full approval of their applications.

It was proposed by Councillor Barrow, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and

Resolved that the Committee recommend to the Fire Authority that the terms of reference of the Committee be changed in order that consideration of Outside Employment applications is delegated to officers.

6a Human Resources Committee Terms of Reference

This report provided details of the Terms of Reference of the Human Resources Committee, as they appear in the Fire Authority's Members' Handbook, for review by this Committee.

Councillor Hartin asked why the Committee was being asked to receive the Pensions Panel minutes. The ACFO advised that the minutes needed to be received somewhere and that due to the relative size of the meetings and the nature of the minutes, it was more appropriate for the Human Resources Committee to receive them rather than the full Fire Authority. The Management Support Officer undertook to ensure that this matter was clarified when the Fire Authority considered the Committee's recommendations.

It was proposed by Councillor Picken, seconded by Councillor Barrow, and

Resolved that the Committee, having reviewed its Terms of Reference, recommend the changes outlined in the report to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Blundell arrived at this point (2.10 pm) and apologised for being late.

7 Role Descriptions for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

This report asked Members to review the existing Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee and to make recommendations regarding any additions and / or amendments required to the Fire Authority.

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

Resolved that having reviewed the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee, attached at Appendices A and B respectively, the Committee recommends the changes outlined in the report to the Fire Authority.

9 Member Training and Development Update

Following the last meeting and subsequent approval by the Fire Authority the training and development questionnaire was issued to all Members. To date responses have been received from some Members but not all. Collation of the responses has begun and a proposed schedule of Member briefings / training has been drafted which it is hoped will be circulated at the April 2011 Fire Authority meeting.

Councillor Picken referred to the forthcoming Telford & Wrekin Council elections and the possible resultant changes to the Fire Authority membership. The ACFO explained that the member training and development questionnaire would be circulated to any new Fire Authority members.

Resolved that the Committee noted the contents of the verbal update.

10 Part-time Workers Case Settlement Agreement

This report brought to the attention of the Human Resources Committee the settlement agreement issued in conclusion of the long-running Part-time Workers (prevention of less favourable treatment) Fire Brigades Union (FBU) employment tribunal cases and the work now being done by the Service.

The ACFO explained that the compensation payments detailed in paragraph 4 of the report are the maximum amounts to be paid, and these will be paid pro-rata where appropriate. The minimum figure payable to an eligible employee is £150. The final total to be paid by this Authority is still being calculated but the Treasurer is satisfied that it will be covered by the provisions made within the Pensions Liabilities and Other Staff Issues Reserve.

Councillor Barrow referred to paragraph 5 on page 2 of the appendix to the report and asked for clarification of the term 'injury to feelings'. The ACFO explained that this was a legal term related to discrimination and the recognition of upset caused by unfair treatment.

Councillor Hartin asked if the settlement was likely to cause any issues with the FBU. The ACFO explained that negotiations with the FBU had been tied up as part of the agreement. The only likely source of dispute may arise from those cases where an employee has transferred in from another fire and rescue service and has accrued service with that service as a retained firefighter.

In these cases, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service would have to pay for the service accrued elsewhere. The employee would be asked to detail any previous service in their claim but this would have to be verified and cases may arise through this.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

11 Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations – Amendments to the Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book)

The Committee was asked to note the National Joint Council Circular NJC/04/11 'Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations –Amendments to the Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book)'.

The ACFO explained that as a result of the case settlement regarding this issue, the terms and conditions for Grey Book staff needed to be amended at a national level.

Councillor Hartin asked if all the changes had been agreed with the Unions. The ACFO responded that they had and that the circular details the implementation of the resultant changes.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the Circular.

12 Post Reductions 2011-12

This report informed Members of the decision to delete several posts from the substantive establishment with effect from 1 April 2011. This is in direct response to the outcome of the Authority's Public Value consultation work with both internal staff groups and wider public stakeholders and the need to save £1.146 million in 2011/12 alone.

The ACFO explained that the District Support Team posts referred to in section 4 of the report are new posts therefore the reductions detailed do not involve the removal of posts. The ACFO further explained that communication of the changes had been very important for maintaining staff morale etc.

Councillor Hartin referred to the non-uniformed posts and asked how cover was being provided particularly for the Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Reduction Officer post. The ACFO explained that this post was a discrete piece of work which had been jointly funded. As this is not a core function of the service, RTC reduction work has been pulled back into Community Fire Safety and will be done through events etc.

Councillor Hartin asked if there had been any discussions with motoring organisations etc regarding possible joint working. The ACFO responded that to the best of her knowledge this had not happened but that it was something that could be looked at. The ACFO undertook to discuss this with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Councillor Picken commented that he hoped that the situation would not arise where there were possible reductions in firefighter numbers. The ACFO explained that there are 60 forecast retirements over the next four years. All plans and initiatives for managing vacancies have therefore looked at accommodating these 60 posts. However, these plans may have to be revisited if the situation worsens in the future.

Councilor Picken then asked about New Dimensions. The ACFO explained that the New Dimensions funding has been placed within the Training and Development budget. A training programme and documentation is in place and training is being delivered on a rolling / refresher basis. The Incident Response Unit is based at Telford and the Water team at Shrewsbury and training is being looked at on a countywide basis.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

13 Reasonable Adjustments Update

This report provided an overview of reasonable adjustments that have been made for our employees to support them whilst in our employment.

The HR Manager commented that the increase in the number of people being supported may be because employees have seen how others with similar needs have been supported and therefore have been more comfortable with coming forward to ask for support.

Councillor Barrow asked if any mention of the help available to those with disabilities is made during recruitment. The HR Manager confirmed that the Service does offer help with reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

14 Progress on Implementation of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

This report updated Members on the progress of actions identified within the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan up to 18 March 2011, which is monitored through the Directorate Business Plans.

Members noted that there were issues with the appendix to the report with some members having colour and some having black and white copies of it. The Management Support Officer undertook to ensure that this did not happen in future and that all Members are provided with a colour copy.

Councillor Hartin asked whom the Gypsy and Traveller anti-discrimination training was being delivered to. The HR Manager explained that this was being delivered to the watches and that the idea for the training had come from the Equality and Diversity (E&D) Department.

Councillor Hartin commented that Shropshire Council differentiates between the Gypsy and the Traveller communities. The HR Manager undertook to ensure that the E&D Officer was aware of this.

It was noted that there was an error in the appendix with reference to Action Number 22. The Quarter 4 update should read '...are now using more interactive methods' rather than '...are not using more interactive methods'.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress on the actions in the Single Equality Action Plan.

15 Equality and Diversity Work at Fire Stations

This report provided an overview of the Equality and Diversity (E&D) work that is being undertaken at Fire Stations.

Councillor Hartin referred to page 2 of the report and asked about attacks on firefighters and how these are dealt with. The ACFO explained that there is an internally drafted policy for dealing with attacks. If there was a spate of incidents then joint working with the Police would be explored. Joint attendance at incidents is not normal practice however in exceptional circumstances this would happen. The Committee felt that this was a serious issue for the Service and should be dealt with as a priority if the situation arose.

Councilor Picken further commented that he would expect there to be joint attendance at major incidents. The ACFO explained that the Officer in Charge of the incident would carry out dynamic risk assessments for both the incidents and the crews attending and would engage other services as and when required.

Councilor Blundell commented that in addition to Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) there is also New College in Wellington.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

16 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following item on the grounds that it 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 and 2

17 Applications to undertake Outside Employment (Approved Provisionally) (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

This exempt report informed Members of four applications from Fire Authority employees to undertake outside employment, which have been approved provisionally by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

An additional outside employment application which had been provisionally approved, was tabled to the meeting for consideration (Copy to be attached to signed exempt minutes)

The Committee agreed to consider the four outside employment applications detailed in the original report en bloc, together with the tabled application, as members had given due consideration to this.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Kiernan, seconded by Councillor Barrow and

Resolved that the Committee confirm the provisional approvals for the five applications, previously given by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

18 Redeployment / Reasonable Adjustments under the remit of the Equality Act 2010 (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

This report provided information regarding redeployment and reasonable adjustments of an employee under the remit of the Equality Act 2010.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 3.10 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....