

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Human Resources Committee Meeting  
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury  
on Thursday, 17 October 2013 at 1.00 pm**

## **Present**

### **Members**

Councillors Adams (Chair), Mrs Barrow, Mrs Bould (for items 8 to 15), Cherrington, Picken and Price

### **Officers**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services), Human Resources Manager, Equality and Diversity Officer, Corporate Support Manager (for items 1 to 6), Head of Development, Safety and Risk; and Executive Support Officers (two)

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Kiernan.

## **2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were disclosed.

## **3 Minutes**

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee, held on 21 March 2013.

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

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee, held on 21 March 2013, 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 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.

The Chair asked Members, who had joined more recently, whether they had any training requirements. Councillor Cherrington responded that, whilst there was much to learn, common sense could be relied upon.

The Chair asked if longer-serving Members had any requirements. Councillor Price commented that he found appeals training to be helpful.

The Chair questioned whether there should be training for disciplinary and capability processes. The Corporate Support Manager advised that currently training is arranged to take place prior to meetings. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services) (ACFO-CS) added that an overview of disciplinary and capability processes could be presented at induction and that the current approach of training on specific issues as they occur appears to be successful.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Note the constitution of the Human Resources Committee (attached as an Appendix); and
- b) Agree that currently there is no training or development, which should be undertaken by the Committee in order to fulfil its role

## 6 Merger of Human Resources and Standards Committees

This report asked Members to consider the feasibility of merging the Human Resources Committee with the Standards Committee. A similar report had been taken to the September meeting of the Standards Committee to seek its Members' views. Recommendations from both Committees would then be taken forward to the December meeting of the Fire Authority for consideration.

Councillor Mrs Barrow commented that Standards Committees meet infrequently and a merger of the Committees would save time. Councillor Mrs Barrow suggested that Standards could become a sub-committee of the Human Resources Committee.

In response to the Chair's question regarding the Independent Person, the Corporate Support Manager (CSM) explained that the Independent Person was not a member of the Standards Committee but was available to be consulted regarding any allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct. The CSM added that since the establishment of the Standards framework there had been no allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct. Any cases, which did arise, could, however, be heard by a hearings panel, much in the same way as employee appeals were heard by the Human Resources Committee appeals hearing panel.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee recommend the merging of the Human Resources and Standards Committees to the Fire Authority

The Corporate Support Manager left the meeting at this point (1.10pm).

## 7 Investors in People Re-Accreditation

This report provided feedback on the findings of the most recent Investors in People (IIP) audit, which took place in September 2013.

The ACFO-CS summarised the report and potential areas for development. Councillor Price enquired in what timeframe the recommended changes would be completed. The ACFO-CS replied that proposals would be presented to the March 2014 Committee meeting and the ACFO-CS would report back upon completion.

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Cherrington and

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

Councillor Mrs Bould joined the meeting at this point (1.13pm).

## 8 Post Reductions 2013/14

This report provided an update on the progress made on the reduction of the substantive establishment as a result of the Authority's Public Value consultation work. This work resulted from a recognised need to save approximately £3million over 4 years, commencing in April 2011. This report did not refer to issues arising from the need to create further budget reductions as a result of funding settlements since 2011, which work is ongoing.

Councillor Price asked if was intended to use the £50,000 saved through changes to the provision of Ordnance Survey mapping as replacement for the required savings to be achieved by the reduction of two posts. The ACFO-CS undertook to seek advice on this issue.

Councillor Price enquired if it would still be necessary to shed all eight of the non-uniformed posts over the period 2011/2012 to 2014/2015, as agreed at the Fire Authority meeting in December 2010. The ACFO-CS undertook to clarify this issue.

The Chair questioned what would happen if there was a reduction of two posts in addition to the £50,000 savings. The ACFO-CS explained that the purpose of the report was to summarise actions against requirements and to identify if redundancies would be required.

The Chair sought confirmation of the effect of post deletions on budgets. The ACFO-CS responded that previously there was a budget for 333 staff and this has been reduced to 328 staff, without any effect on individuals or stations.

Councillor Picken raised the question as to how far staffing levels could be reduced. The Chair commented that in the event of major events the Service would utilise its cross-border working arrangements

Councillor Mrs Barrow asked how staff morale had been affected. The ACFO-CS referred to the findings of the IIP Audit, which indicated that morale was good and better than expected. It would be important to continue communication with staff in the light of further cuts in the future.

Attendance times should not be affected by cuts nor should there be an increased reliance on cross-border arrangements.

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

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

## **9 Update on Occupational Health Provision**

This report gave an update on the provision of the Occupational Health Service provided to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service by the current provider: Working Well Occupational Health and Wellbeing Services, part of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

The Chair asked if all 190 of the individuals seen for fitness assessments were for routine tests. The Human Resources (HR) Manager confirmed that this was the case and that they were annual fitness tests.

Councillor Price commented that it was good to see that a timely return to work is promoted. Councillor Cherrington added that other organisations employ similar approaches to encourage employees to return to their work system at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Picken noted that there was no reference to stress in the report. The HR Manager informed that there are facilities available, which include a direct referral process and the services provided by the Network of Staff Supporters Ltd.

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

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

## **10 Equality and Diversity Steering Group Update**

This report provided a summary of the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group from August 2012 to September 2013.

The Equality and Diversity Officer (E&DO) presented the report and was asked what partner agencies' approach was to the Initial Impact Assessment (IIA). The E&DO understood that it was likely that the IIA would be standardised throughout Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

Photographs of the Cultural Diversity Day, which took place in The Square, Shrewsbury, were shown to the meeting, copies of which are attached to the signed minutes.

A leaflet promoting a 'Women's Firefighting Taster Day' at Oswestry Station was circulated to the meeting, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes. The Chair suggested that the address for the event should be included on the leaflet.

Councillor Mrs Barrow asked if the local school and college (Marches School and North Shropshire College) had been made aware of the event, which was to take place in Oswestry.

The E&DO advised that schools were to be contacted during the week when the meeting took place and the E&DO would check to ensure that the school and college referred to were included.

Councillor Mrs Bould questioned why the subscription to the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) was not to be renewed in view of the Association's relevance in the Telford area. The ACFO-CS advised that the Service appeared to attract recruits from the Asian community in only a limited part of the County and services promoted by the AFSA did not necessarily feed through; for example, reports on specific issues. After three years of contributing to the AFSA, it had been concluded that further subscriptions would not provide value for money. More useful information was provided by the Service's Community Fire Safety Advocate (CFSA) for the Wellington area. The Chair asked that the E&DO relays contact details for the CFSA for the Wellington area to Councillor Mrs Bould.

Councillor Price requested that the E&DO bring a case study of a Hate Crime fire-related incident to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Development, Safety and Risk brought to the attention of the meeting a Hate Crime related incident that had occurred on the Service's Facebook page.

The Chair sought clarification of the purpose of the 'Single Equality Scheme Action Plan (new monitoring format)' (Appendix A to the report). The E&DO explained that the proposed format replaced the existing extensive spreadsheet and it would be easier to use.

The Chair questioned whether, in view of the minimal number of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees in the Service, subscription to Stonewall could be considered worthwhile. The ACFO-CS responded that subscriptions were reviewed annually, adding that Stonewall provided policy feedback to the Service and that the appearance of their logo on Service materials reinforced the Service's image of being forward-thinking, inclusive and open to dialogue.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

## **11 Shropshire Equalities Forum and Inauguration of Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire Ltd**

This report set out the progress made by the Shropshire Equalities Forum, as requested by the Fire Authority, and advised of the inauguration of Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd.

The ACFO-CS suggested that in view of the time restriction placed upon the meeting, this report be noted as it stood.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

## 12 Rights and Fairness Telford

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

The ACFO-CS, as with agenda item 11 and in view of the time restriction placed upon the meeting, suggested that this report be noted as it stood.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

## 13 Health and Safety Executive Consolidation Report – Update

This report informed of the progress made in response to the Health and Safety Executive Consolidation Report (HSECR) and subsequent Action Plan. It provided an update on the information provided to the Committee in April 2012.

The Head of Development, Safety and Risk explained the purpose of the report and advised that any questions regarding the contents of the Appendix would be addressed in the following closed session.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

## 14 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Cherrington and

**Resolved** that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 15 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12(A) to the Act, by virtue of Paragraphs 3

The Equality and Diversity Officer left the meeting at this point (1.55pm).

## 15 Health and Safety Consolidation Report – Update

The Committee received the appendix to report 13 – Health and Safety Executive Consolidation Report – Update.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee receive and note the appendix to report 13 - Health and Safety Consolidation Report – Update

The meeting closed at 2.00 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....