

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Human Resources Committee
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 4 December 2008, at 11.00 am**

Present

Councillors Dr Drummond (Vice-Chair), Gibbon, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak (Chair), Hurst-Knight and Williams

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight and seconded by Councillor Gibbon

That Councillor Holyoak be elected Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Holyoak was duly elected Chair to hold office until the meeting of the Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight and seconded by Councillor Holyoak

That Councillor Dr Drummond be appointed Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Dr Drummond was duly appointed Vice-Chair to hold office until the meeting of the Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Picken.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 5 June 2008.

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 June 2008, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6 Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees – Chapter 3 Consultation Response

This report briefed members on the proposed code of conduct for local government employees and to provide a suggested response to the consultation exercise currently underway. The full consultation report is available at www.communities.gov.uk.

Councillor Hurst-Knight suggested that the response to question 22 'Should the employees' code extend to employees of parish councils?' be changed to yes instead of no response, due to the contacts and links that stations, such as Bridgnorth, have with the Parish Councils. The meeting agreed with this suggestion and it was moved by Councillor Hartin, seconded Councillor Gibbon and

Resolved that the Human Resources Committee have considered and approve the suggested responses to the consultation paper insofar as it relates to an employee code of conduct (Chapter 3) with the inclusion of the amended response to question 22.

7 Attendance Management – Outcomes of the Health and Safety Executive and Communities and Local Government Joint Study

This report brought to the Human Resources Committee's attention the recent circular on attendance management in the Fire and Rescue Service (FSC 30/2008), the recommendations therein and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's current position in relation to those recommendations.

The Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) explained that current sickness monitoring does not take account of Retained Duty System (RDS) staff. Councillor Hartin commented that RDS staff was not highlighted in the circular and asked if there was any further information coming from the Government in relation to this. The ACO replied that she was not aware of any further information and also that the brigades monitored in the study may have included several metropolitan brigades who have relatively low number of RDS staff. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) would like to monitor levels of sickness in RDS staff but this is difficult due to the different levels of cover etc

and it would require greater levels of monitoring by the Retained Support Officers.

Councillor Hartin expressed concern that there appeared to be a lack of knowledge about the RDS at Government level and asked if there was anyway to address this. The ACO thought that there was and that linking it to the Equality agenda e.g. management of disability may be an appropriate way to do this.

Resolved that the Human Resources Committee

- a) Note the comparative position of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service against the best practice activities listed, including current levels of sickness absence; and
- b) Consider that there are no outstanding areas for improvement which they wish to direct Officers to address.

8 Attainment of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government

This report notified the Human Resources Committee of the Service's recent successful external assessment at Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) and provided a copy of the draft report resulting from the assessment, together with management comments.

Councillor Holyoak asked if there had been many areas in the report that management had needed to challenge. The Equality and Diversity (E&D) Officer gave some examples of the areas where clarification was being sought from the assessors for instance there were some areas where SFRS had not achieved the top mark but had also not been given any areas for improvement. The E&D Officer also explained that the management comments had been agreed by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group before the report was returned to the assessors.

Councillor Hartin asked what the next step in relation to the ESLG was. The E&D Officer explained that there is a Level 4 to the ESLG. This is a self assessment and the Equality and Diversity Steering Group need to look at progress against this. The ESLG is due to change to the Equality Standard Local Framework in April 2009, which will cause a change to the constituent levels and methods of attainment. The E&D Steering Group will decide if SFRS will try for Level 4 before the anticipated regime change in April 2009.

Resolved that the Human Resources Committee note the contents of the report, the draft assessment report and the responses submitted to that report.

9 Fire and Rescue Equality and Diversity Workforce Recruitment Targets 2008-2013

This report informed the Human Resources Committee of progress with regard to setting the Equality and Diversity Workforce Recruitment Targets as detailed within the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018.

The E&D Officer explained that Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 requires recruitment targets to be set rather than targets relating to the number of existing employees. This is a better system for SFRS.

The meeting then discussed various issues relating to recruitment advertising including the use of specialist press, local equality and diversity groups, schools and joint events. Councillor Hurst-Knight commented that the issue had been raised at the Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum meeting which took place on 2 December 2008 at Bridgnorth Fire Station.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

10 Update of Progress against the People Strategy

This report informed Members of the Human Resources Committee about progress against the People Strategy approved by the Committee in 2006.

The Committee congratulated the ACO and her staff on their achievements in relation to the People Strategy.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

11 Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum

This report informed the Human Resources Committee of the progress to date on this group, as requested by the Fire Authority.

Councillor Hurst-Knight reported that there has been an increase in the number of 'hate crime' incidents in Shropshire. The Hate Crime campaign is to be relaunched in January 2009 across the county as a whole. The E&D Officer reported that the Service's outreach vehicle will be taking part in this campaign, particularly in the more rural areas of the county.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked that the active part taken by SFRS in the Equalities Partnership be noted.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

12 Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnership

This report informed the Human Resources Committee of the progress of this group, as requested by the Fire Authority.

Councillor Holyoak asked where the Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnership meet. The E&D Officer explained that the Partnership has an office in Telford but they tend to meet at various locations due to space constraints at their office.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

13 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following 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 4.

14 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 5 June 2008.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 June 2008, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15 Applications to Undertake Outside Employment (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

This report informed Members of two applications to undertake outside employment.

Resolved that Members approve the applications made for outside employment.

16 Changes to Assistant Chief Fire Officer post (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

This report advised the Human Resources Committee of changes to the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) note the contents of the report; and
- b) approve the amended job description (as appended to the report).

The meeting adjourned at 12.10 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....