

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE HR & EQUALITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017 AT SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE HQ

13. PRESENT:

Councillor	Left	Authority
S Pickering (Chair)		Rhondda Cynon Taf
D Ali (Deputy Chair)		Cardiff
S Bradwick		Rhondda Cynon Taf
S Evans		Torfaen
A Hussey		Caerphilly
K McCaffer		Vale of Glamorgan
D Naughton		Cardiff
C Smith		Bridgend
P Wong		Cardiff

APOLOGIES:

R Crowley		Vale of Glamorgan
C Elsbury		Caerphilly
K Gibbs		Merthyr Tydfil
D Thomas		Torfaen
G Thomas		Blaenau Gwent

ABSENT:

H Thomas		Newport
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OFFICERS PRESENT: ACO P Haynes – Director of People Services; Mr C Powell – Deputy Monitoring Officer; Mr M Malson – Head of Human Resources; AM I Greenman – Head of Training & Development; Mr A Jones – Employee Relations Manager; Mrs J Nancarrow – Absence Management Manager; SM G Evans – Initial Training Manager.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Each Member declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item which affected their Authority.

15. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair informed the Committee of the following communications received from Welsh Government concerning Firefighter Pension Scheme matters:

WELSH CIRCULAR W-FRSC (2017) 12

The circular requires each Fire & Rescue Authority to complete the financial and non-financial sections of the Fire Pensions Account Estimates form (FPF1) by 15 December 2017.

Officers will action and respond to the request for data.

WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES IN WALES

The following consultation on amendments to firefighter pension schemes in Wales have been received:

- Survivor benefits under The 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme and 2007 Compensation Scheme, and other minor amendments to the 1992 and 2007 Firefighters' Pension Schemes.
- Minor amendments to the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme and Transitional Arrangements.

The consultation response date is 21 December 2017, and Officers will draft a response for the Committee's Chair and Vice Chair's prior approval.

THE ALL WALES SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD (FIREFIGHTERS' PENSIONS)

The All Wales Scheme Advisory Board (Firefighters' Pensions) will meet on 27 November 2017. The most significant item on the agenda is the Government Actuary Department submission on the 2016 Valuation. Board members will scrutinise the 'Wales assumptions' and consider the next steps.

The Committee's Chair will attend the Board meeting supported by the Acting ACO – People Services and the Authority's Treasurer.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 17 JULY 2017

The minutes of the HR & Equalities Committee meeting held on 17 July 2017 were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings.

17. FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES – WELSH GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS 2017/18

The ACO People Services informed Members that under the terms of the Public Services Pension Act 2013, the Fire & Rescue Authority is the recognised Scheme Manager for Firefighters' Pension Schemes and as such

needs to identify through which mechanism it intends to fulfil its role and obligations.

Members were advised that Welsh Government issues regular communications to all Chief Fire Officers, Chairs and Clerks of Fire & Rescue Authorities electronically in a standard circular template. These emails and circulars can cover a variety of areas including all aspects of Firefighters' Pension Schemes, and have to be noted or actioned as appropriate. This report sets out the current requirements for Firefighters' Pension Schemes' managerial and administrative actions.

RESOLVED THAT

17.1 Members agreed to accept the Welsh Government Firefighters' Pension Scheme Circulars and emails received throughout 2017/18.

17.2 Members agreed to note the actions implemented for each of the Circulars.

18. UPDATE ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Area Manager – Head of Training & Development provided Members with an update on the proposals to implement and review leadership development throughout the Service.

RESOLVED THAT

Following a question and answer session on the Leadership Development Programme, Members noted the content of the presentation and accompanying report.

19. THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

The Area Manager – Head of Training & Development introduced the Initial Training Manager to the Committee, who informed Members that the Apprenticeship Levy was announced in the Summer Budget of 2015, and at the Autumn Statement 2015 it was announced that the Levy would come into effect in April 2017.

Members were advised that the Government committed to boosting productivity by investing in human capital, and as part of this, committed to developing vocational skills and to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships. Overall, the Government has committed to an additional 3 million apprenticeships and it will support quality training by putting employers at the centre of the system.

The Initial Training Manager delivered a presentation to Members which identified the relevance of the changes in Wales and what these changes mean for South Wales Fire & Rescue Service.

RESOLVED THAT

- 19.1 Members agreed to note the content of the report and presentation.
- 19.2 Members agreed to receive updates on the effect of the apprenticeship levy in terms of recruitment of apprentices in the Fire & Rescue Service.
- 19.3 Members agreed to receive an update on the ratio of levy charges/apprentices in comparison to North Wales and Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Services outside of the meeting.

20. ANNUAL SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT – 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

The Absence Management Manager informed Members that the average number of shifts/working days lost per employee in each category of staff (excluding On Call staff) for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 is 9.73 days per employee in comparison with 9.51 days per employee for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. A further analysis of short and long term absences, self- certification and accidents on duty was also provided.

Following a question and answer session, Officers agreed to provide a further breakdown of non-physical injuries and the effect of mental health issues in the workplace in the next Annual Sickness Absence Report.

The ACO People Services commended the Absence Management Manager for her detailed report.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

21. ANNUAL REPORT ON GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINE ACTIVITIES – 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

The Employee Relations Manager provided Members with a summary of grievance and discipline matters investigated by the Resolution Unit during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

RESOLVED THAT

Following a question and answer session, Members agreed to note the content of the report.

22. NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES – INCLUSIVE FIRE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The Head of HR informed Members that under the guidance of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire & Rescue Services, the Inclusive Fire Service (IFSG) was established to undertake a comprehensive review engaging with the Fire & Rescue Services and their employees to consider equality, diversity, cultural and behavioural issues with the purpose of developing improvement strategies which could be supported across all Services to deliver equality and diversity improvement at a local level.

The outcome of the IFSG's research and engagement activities was that the group identified improvement strategies relating to four key areas of promoting an inclusive culture (which includes tackling bullying and harassment), recruitment, progression and retention.

The Head of HR provided Members with the detail of the IFSG's findings and proposed strategies, and the Service's response to their implementation and timeframes for delivery.

The Chair and Members thanked Officers for the excellent report.

RESOLVED THAT

22.1 Members agreed to the proposed strategies identified by the Inclusive Fire Service Group and to take them forward on behalf of the Fire & Rescue Authority.

22.2 Members agreed to receive a further report on the Implementation Plan and Equality Risk Assessment against the strategies at the meeting of the HR & Equalities Committee taking place on 5 February 2018.

23. MODIFIED FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME – WIDOW'S ENTITLEMENT

The ACO People Services informed Members of an anomaly within the terms of the Modified Firefighters' Pension Scheme as introduced in Wales in 2007, and the impact on an individual widow.

Members noted the ambiguity of Welsh Government's advice, as detailed within paragraph 2.5 of the report, in regard to the individual case, and

Officers agreed to seek further clarity from Welsh Government officials in this regard.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to allow the widow access to the Modified Firefighters' Pension Scheme, subject to the individual paying the appropriate contributions.

24. COMPARTMENT FIRE BEHAVIOUR TRAINING FACILITY AT CARDIFF GATE

The Head of Training & Development delivered a presentation to provide Members with an update on the significant developments and progress being made towards the completion of the Compartment Fire Behaviour Training Facility at Cardiff Gate Training & Development Centre.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the content of the presentation.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The ACO People Services presented the Forward Work Programme for 2017/18.

RESOLVED THAT

Members accepted the Forward Work Programme for the HR & Equalities Committee 2017/18.

26. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no items of urgent business to be considered, however the Chair wished to remind Members that today's meeting of the Committee was the last before the retirement of the ACO People Services on 31 December 2017.

The Chair and Members took the opportunity to wish the ACO a long, happy and healthy retirement, and thanked him for his outstanding work and his support, advice and wealth of knowledge in pension schemes.

The ACO People Services thanked Members for their best wishes.