**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**MINUTES OF THE HR & EQUALITIES COMMITTEE MEETING**

**HELD ON MONDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2019 AT**

**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS**

**15. PRESENT**

**Councillor Left Authority**

S Pickering (Chair) Rhondda Cynon Taff

M Colbran Merthyr Tydfil

P Drake Vale of Glamorgan

S Evans Torfaen

D Naughton Cardiff

H Thomas Newport

A Lister 12:15 Cardiff

A Roberts 11:35 Rhondda Cynon Taff

**APOLOGIES:**

D Ali Cardiff

C Elsbury Caerphilly

A Hussey Caerphilly

J Holt Blaenau Gwent

**ABSENT:**

H Jarvie Vale of Glamorgan

A Jones Torfaen

R Shaw Bridgend

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services;Mrs S Watkins – Head of Corporate Support & Deputy Monitoring Officer;AM I Greenman – Head of Training Delivery; Mr A Jones – Head of Human Resources; SM M Wyatt – Training Manager, Mrs G Goss – HR Manager Employee Relations, Mrs K Davies – HR Manager Attendance Management, Mrs D Doel – HR Manager Recruitment & Assessment, Mr C Wood – Equality & Diversity Officer, Mr D Crews – Firefighter, SM Kevin Yates, Training Manager

**16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

All Members declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item that affected their Authority.

**17. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**REMEMBRANCE SERVICE**

The Chair informed Members of the Remembrance Service being held at headquarters at 11:00hrs and that the meeting would be interrupted at 10:50hrs to allow Members to pay their respects.

**MICROPHONE TESTING**

The Chair advised Members that the microphones placed in the meeting room were for testing purposes only, ahead of the next Fire Authority meeting.

**ITEM 9 ON THE AGENDA – CFBT PROJECT UPDATE**

It was agreed that the CFBT Project Update be presented as the last item.

**ADDITIONAL REPORT**

It was agreed to add an additional report on Job Evaluation under any other urgent business.

**18. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2019 were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings.

**19. NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL CIRCULARS ON PAY FOR 2019 – BRIGADE MANAGERS AND OTHER ROLES**

The Director of People Services provided Members with details of the National Joint Council and Local Government Services’ circulars which confirms agreement reached in respect of pay awards for 2019 for Brigade Managers and other roles, and how it related to South Wales Fire & Rescue Service. As stated in the Annual Pay Policy, the Fire & Rescue Authority has agreed to implement nationally agreed pay awards.

**RESOLVED THAT**

19.1 Members noted the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire & Rescue Services joint circulars, which confirms agreement has been reached in respect of the pay award for 2019.

19.2 Members also noted the National Joint Council for Local Government Services’ circular issued in 2018, which confirmed a 2 year arrangement covering 2018 and 2019.

**20. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN (SEP) UPDATE**

The Equality and Diversity Officer advised Members that the Service’s current Strategic Equality Plan is time-limited to 31 March 2020 with a new follow-on Plan being required under law.

The first draft of equality outcomes for the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2025 together with a mapping table indicating lineage which lead to the formation of the draft outcomes, were presented to Members.

A consultation process will be undertaken on the plan and feedback will be presented at a future meeting of the Fire Authority.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the content of the report.

**21. FIREFIGHTERS’ PENSION SCHEMES – WALES GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS 2019/2020**

The Director of People Services advised Members that under the terms of the Public Services’ Pension Act 2013 (PSBA 2013), the Fire & Rescue Authority is the recognised Scheme Manager for Firefighters’ Pension Schemes.

Welsh Government issue 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.

**RESOLVED THAT**

21.1 Following a question and answer session on the initial pension shortfall, as reported at a previous Pension Board meeting, Members noted that the expectation is that the service will be required to meet the shortfall. It was agreed to await the Hearing meeting on tapering arrangements, the case management for which is taking place in December.

21.2 Members accepted the Welsh Government (Firefighters’ Pension Scheme Circulars and emails) that have been received in the 2019/2020 year to date.

21.3 Members noted the actions that have been implemented for each of the circulars.

At 10:50hrs the meeting was interrupted to allow Members to attend the Remembrance Service. The meeting re-convened at 11:15hrs.

**22. RECRUITMENT, ATTRACTION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The HR Manager Recruitment & Assessment provided Members with an update on the Recruitment, Attraction & Engagement Strategy that is being developed on behalf of the Service. The aim is to attract, engage, recruit and retain a diverse workforce which is representative of the community of South Wales, and to become a ‘preferred employer of choice’. The report provided details of previous work undertaken, ongoing developments and the way the Service would like to move forward.

The Head of HR advised Members that the Strategy will be developed from 2020 onwards. He also advised that following the recent Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment Process which was open for a limited time over 2 days, the Service received a total of 3,200 applications of interest, which was pleasing to report.

Following a question and answer session on the recruitment process, and the perception members of the public have on the role of a firefighter, it was noted that standards cannot be lowered however the service can work through any barriers that individuals may have and will help to develop them. The Service’s fitness advisers can also assist, if required. For those applicants that did not meet the entry criteria, the Service will work through any shortfalls with them.

In relation to the low number of female firefighters, it was confirmed that positive action work is being carried out in conjunction with organisations such as Stonewall and Chwarae Teg. Females are encouraged and advised that they can undertake the role.

Applications have also been received from former Cadets, and the Service is considering how it can work with them and provide support to future applicants.

The ‘He for She’ campaign launched at the Senedd was very successful and showed how services can move away from discriminating barriers. The Service will ensure it maintains its impetus in this regard.

The Chair thanked the HR Manager for the work undertaken on the Strategy.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the content of the report.

**23. UPDATE ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – 1 SEPTEMBER 2018- 31 MARCH 2019**

The Head of HR updated Members on the development modules in respect of the future leaders of the Service, and outlined the background for future plans.

The Service is considering more effective ways of working in terms of cost and time management and reviewing promotional processes used within other organisations.

The Head of HR advised of the recent Leadership conference held with South Wales Police and the Ambulance Service which was a successful event and it is hoped that the event will run on an annual basis. Keynote speakers were in attendance and the event’s themes were based on leadership development, leadership activities, individual productivity, nutrition, talent management, customer service levels, employment engagement, lower absence rates and how to reduce disciplinaries and grievances.

Benefits, resource sharing and opportunities to share costs with other agencies will be considered. Tentative discussions with South Wales Police and WAST have taken place in this regard.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the contents of the report.

**24. ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY & WELLBEING DELIVERY PLAN REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2018 – 31 MARCH 2019**

The HR Manager Attendance Management informed Members that the Service published the Mental Health Strategy 2018-2021 in September 2018. The report outlined the progress made to the Service’s mental health provision from April 2018 to March 2019, a summary of the ongoing health and wellbeing support provided by the Service and a brief overview of the new activities to be undertaken from April 2019 to March 2020.

The HR Manager advised that she is due to meet with an assessor to discuss the corporate work standard in relation to securing an externally accredited award and to review how the Service is achieving against their standard.

A Wellbeing Steering Group has been set up which is represented by members of staff from across the service. The HR Manager and Firefighter Crews are currently undertaking a review of mental health. Firefighter Crews is also a member of the Royal Foundation Working Group which has been established to provide mental health support and wellbeing of front line and other operational members of staff. Firefighter Crews provided Members with an insight into the work of the group which consists of representatives from Fire, Ambulance, Police and Coastguard. Firefighter Crews will be seconded to HR to review what support is in place, from a Service perspective and will visit neighbouring services to discuss good practice.

The Service’s aim is to build on the ‘Time to Talk’ Campaign and to arrange an awareness day through the Royal Foundation. It was noted that 1 in 4 will suffer with some form of mental health and of those, only 25% will access support. Suicide rates are male dominated. Those between the ages of 40-45 in Wales are more at risk of taking their own life and with this in mind, the Service will consider what support can be provided. Line managers will be advised where information can be found to provide support.

The ACO People Services was pleased to advise Members of the powerful partnership that is now in place and the good piece of work that Firefighter Crews, in conjunction with the HR Manager, has completed to date. She also congratulated Firefighter Crews on securing his place on the Royal Foundation.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the contents of the report.

**25. GENDER PAY GAP STATEMENT**

The Director of People Services advised Members that under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities), all public authorities are required to publish gender pay gap information by reporting the percentage differences in pay between their male and female employees.

Public authorities must publish the required information based on data captured on the snapshot date of 31 March 2019, within 12 months. Accordingly, the deadline for publication is 30 March 2020 for the Service’s Gender Pay Gap report based on figures as at 31 March 2019.

This report details the legal background and requirements placed on the Fire & Rescue Authority to publish a Gender Pay Gap Statement, the reporting metrics set out in legislation, and the definitions for the relevant pay period, full pay relevant employee, ordinary pay and bonus pay.

The Director of People Services also advised Members that the Service will hopefully be able to close the gender pay gap through the implementation of its Recruitment and Attraction Strategy which will be reported at the December meeting of the Fire Authority for final sign off.

**RESOLVED THAT**

25.1 Members noted the contents of the report.

25.2 Year on year figures to be provided at the next meeting, to include comparisons with other services.

**26. UPDATE ON INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

The Training Manager provided Members with an overview of the current position with the Investors in People Award, including future actions remaining until re-accreditation in October 2020.

A presentation was provided on the results received from a recent questionnaire to all staff.

It was noted that all negative and positive comments are being reviewed and the Service will consider how they can be addressed. It was identified that over 1/3 of staff did not engage in the process and this will also be reviewed going forward to ensure they are involved in future engagement.

The Chair thanked the Training Manager for providing the presentation.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the contents of both the presentation and report.

**27. CFBT PROJECT UPDATE**

The Training Manager provided a presentation on the CFBT Project which included images and video footage of a controlled burn.

An invite will be sent to Members for the Official Opening. The Deputy Minister will also be in attendance.

The Chair thanked the Training Manager for the presentation, images and video footage and encouraged Members’ attendance at the Official Opening.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the content of the presentation.

**28. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Corporate Support presented the Forward Work Programme for the HR & Equalities Committee for 2019/20 and the following will be included within the Programme;

* Job Evaluation report to be added for future reference.
* Update on Annual Mental Health Strategy and Wellbeing Delivery Plan.
* Further information to be provided on a wider perspective of the Gender Pay gap.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members accepted the Forward Work Programme for the HR & Equalities Committee 2019/20 together with the additions noted above.

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

**14.1 JOB EVALUATION**

The HR Manager Employee Relations provided Members with a summary of the proposed service wide Job Evaluation Exercise.

In the event of posts being downgraded it was confirmed that they will be protected for 3 years, which is in line with LGPS regulations.

Members advised officers to be mindful of low morale when undertaking the exercise, in instances of downgrading of posts.

**RESOLVED THAT**

Members noted the contents of the report which will be presented and authorised at the December meeting of the Fire Authority.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all staff involved with the completion of all reports presented, which was evidence of the excellent work undertaken by the Authority and the Service.