

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MINUTES OF THE PEOPLE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25 July 2024 AT 1000 HRS IN MEETING ROOM 08 AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mr V Randeniya

OFFICERS PRESENT:

T/Chief Fire Officer S Millington, Assistant Chief Officer A Reed – Director of People Services, D Mika – Director of Strategic Change and Transformation, G Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, Head of People Services – L Shroll, Lead Communications, Attraction and Engagement Officer – L Grogan, HR Manager – J Wells, Dr K Griffiths

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer – B Thompson, T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer – D Loader, Head of Finance, Property and Procurement – L Mullan, T/Head of Corporate Support – W Thomas

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest, other than those already submitted.

3. CHAIRPERSONS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairperson Vij Randeniya had no announcements.

4. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 ALIGNMENT OF SERVICES INCLUSIVE ACTION PLAN AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN TO THE MORRIS REPORT CULTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The report presented by the Head of People Services shared details of a mapping exercise undertaken to ensure the Service's Inclusive Action Plan aligns to the 82 recommendations set out in the Morris Report. The Service accepted all recommendations and work commenced immediately to analyse where the recommendations mapped across to the Services existing activities

in an effort to ensure alignment and prevent duplication. It also mapped the Strategic Equality Plan 2023-26. Additionally, mapping occurs across to the Commissioners Terms of Reference alongside published thematic reviews to ensure a coordinated approach.

This aligns with the transformation work led by the Director of Strategic Change and Transformation. The project has a number of key programmes, one of which is Equality and Diversity.

ACTION

The Director of People Services suggested we bring this item to the People Committee on a regular basis to keep an oversight on the progress and link it into the work of the Director of Strategic Change and Transformation.

RESOLVED THAT

- 4.1.1 The Commissioner considered and noted the content of the report and thanked all for the work that has been done.

4.2 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH UNIT (OHU) ACTIVITY REPORT – 1 APRIL 2023 TO MARCH 2024

Dr Griffiths presented the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) activity report which spanned the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report provided data on the Services expenditure, updates on occupational health initiatives and an outline of strategic development. The OHU are currently evaluating the provision and in line with the Services new governance structures, focus is on data and metrics in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency, whilst also maximising the health and wellbeing of employees.

Current issues are being faced by the department with impact from waiting lists. Counselling and Physiotherapy are still provided in the interim with a view of getting employees back into the workplace.

People Services are undertaking a piece of work looking at the occupational health support provision and what the Service needs versus what resources the Service has and can provide.

From a strategic development perspective, OHU are looking at a patient management system.

The Chairperson highlighted table 6 in the report which provided a summary of in-house counselling appointments that were attended and not attended. The 'Did not attend (DNA)' figure was 38 in the period of 2023-24, and the

Chairperson requested clarification that work was being done to prevent and reduce these figures.

RESOLVED THAT

4.2.1 The Commissioner noted the content of the report.

4.3 ANNUAL REPORT ON GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINE ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024

The report presented by the Head of People Services provided a summary of grievance and discipline matters investigated by the Resolutions Unit during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report also provided some trend analysis over the period of 2015 to 2024.

During the culture review of 2023, the Service contracted support from an external HR company to support the following up of cases and to allow the caseload to be managed during a period of transition.

There was a total of 128 disciplinary cases that had occurred between 2015 to 2023 which were reviewed by Fenella Morris KC and the culture review team. The review highlighted an inconsistent approach to the Service's handling of disciplinary and grievance issues. It was also noted that the recent restructure of the People Services department indicates an improvement in ensuring that the Service has a fair, impartial and balanced approach to disciplinary and grievance cases.

In the period covered by the report, grievances reduced but disciplinary cases were above average. Behaviour related disciplinary cases were amongst the highest levels and the Service is currently reviewing, as part of its wider change and transformation programme, its programme of soft skills development for staff.

The Service has implemented a 'Behaviours Overview Committee' which provides rigorous oversight of disciplinary and grievance cases, as well as complaints.

The Chairperson highlighted the pressure on resources with the increasing caseload and the timeframes involved, and queried whether the Service is operating at an optimum with the length of suspensions and complexities in some of the cases. It was confirmed by the Head of People Services that it does depend on the complexity of the investigation; however, the additional resources and the restructuring of People Services has helped. All suspensions are reviewed weekly.

RESOLVED THAT

4.3.1 The Commissioner noted the content of the report.

4.4 WHISTLEBLOWING/COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS/CONCERNS REPORT

'The report presented on the day by the Interim Monitoring Officer' provided an overview of whistleblowing disclosures, complaints and compliments received by the Service during the financial year 2023/24. It presented an overview of concerns raised through the FDS Speak-Up service since its introduction in April 2023. Due to the sensitive nature and GDPR considerations associated with this information, all information presented has been anonymised.

The key headlines are as follows:

- There were no whistleblowing disclosures in the financial year 2023/24.
- The number of complaints received by the Service has increased by 14% compared to the previous year, from 66 to 75.
- There were no complaints escalated by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
- Of the 75 complaints received by the Service during 2023/24, all 75 have been formally closed.
- The number of compliments received during 2023/4 increased by 34% compared to the previous year, from 82 to 112.
- The number of concerns raised via the anonymous service, FRS Speak Up in the financial year 2023/24 were 53. This was the first year of its introduction.

The ACO People Services advised that comms will be issued shortly to staff regarding disclosures and complaints and the impact that it has. This will ensure that information provided via speak-up services is detailed and effective to allow the Service to investigate. The Service, however, acknowledge that more reassurance is needed. The Chairperson advised that timeframes are needed in the reporting and investigating process.

RESOLVED THAT

4.4.1 The Commissioner considered and noted the content of the report.

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE COMMITTEE 2024/2025

The ACO People Services provided an update on the Forward Work Programme for the People Committee, 2024-2025.

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

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.