



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 04 October 2019

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Birkenshaw

Present: Councillor A Wenham (in the Chair), M Akhtar, C Anderson (for agenda items 1 – 11 only Min nos. 15 - 25 refer), S Benton (for agenda items 1 – 7 only Min nos. 15 - 7 refer), R Downes (as substitute for Councillor J Sunderland), J Fenton-Glynn (for agenda items 1 – 11 only Min nos. 15 – 25 refer), R Hunt (for agenda items 1 – 6 only Min nos.15 - 20 refer), D Jenkins, N Mohammed (for agenda items 1 – 11 only Min nos. 15 – 25 refer), F Shaheen and S Tulley.

In Attendance: None

Apologies: Councillor J Sunderland

15 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2019 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16 Matters arising

None.

17 Urgent items – Firefighters and the risk of cancers

Members were provided with an update on the issue that had been the subject of recent news broadcasts and articles concerning the possible increased risk of cancer among firefighters due to contamination.

They were advised that, whilst it was a fact that the act of combustion created carcinogens, nothing had been found in a study undertaken by the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC), published in March 2018, which would prove or disprove the direct link between that and the incidence of cancer in firefighters.

There was a recommendation in the NFCC report for further investigation which was currently ongoing with the inclusion of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, together with other Brigades, on a voluntary basis. It was evident that more could be done on a practical level to reduce cross-contamination and Members were advised that there had been two internal campaigns to this effect.

Until such time as the NFCC made national recommendations on measures which had to be taken to reduce the cross-contamination, it was reported that West Yorkshire would continue to promote safe methods of working with the support of the Trade Unions.

RESOLVED

That the advice and update on the increased risk of cancers in firefighters be noted.

[The Chair had agreed to the inclusion of the item on an urgent basis due to the timing of the recent articles in the national press which had occurred after the compilation of the agenda for this meeting].

18 Admission of the public

There were no items which required the exclusion of the public and press.

19 Declarations of interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made in any matter under consideration at the meeting.

20 Staff wellbeing and support – presentation

Members received a presentation from the Occupational Health and Safety Manager which advised of the work that was being done within the Brigade with regard to Staff Wellbeing and Support which focused on;

- mental health and the support that was in place for individuals to access
- general health screening
- Employee Assistant Programme, and
- Physiotherapy

21 Your Voice staff survey 2019 – presentation

The Chief Employment Services Officer provided Members with the results from the third and most recent staff survey.

The following areas received the most positive responses:

- Team performance;
- Understanding of role and expected standards;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Safety at work;
- Job satisfaction;
- Satisfaction with watch manager/immediate supervisor.

Aspects which needed the most improvement were as follows;

- Change management;
- Bureaucracy;
- Being fairly paid;
- Feeling valued by the service
- PDR process

It was agreed Members would receive a six-monthly update with regard to the work being done in direct response to the Staff Survey results 2019.

22 Human Resources activity report

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which advised of the establishment, staff profile and strength of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service together with directorate / departmental sickness absence and personnel activity to the end of June 2019.

Members were provided with a breakdown of statistics relating to grievances which had been reported as part of the activity report. Members were advised that they could be categorised as follows;

- Recruitment processes
- Financial loss eg detached duty system
- Compulsory moves, and
- miscellaneous

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

23 Group Manager duty system – outcome of review

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which advised of the outcome of a trialled duty system for Group Managers that had been in operation for nine months to date.

Members were advised that approval had been given at the 5 October 2018 meeting of the Committee to a trial revised duty system for Group Managers. Following a review of the trial, it was proposed that this be implemented on a permanent basis due to its success in achieving increased productivity and flexibility whilst making significant savings of approximately £200k per annum. It was further reported that, following initial concerns from Group Managers, they considered that the revised duty system had brought about significant benefits in terms of increased flexibility.

The trial had allowed a reduction in the number of Group Managers from 12 to 10 and, following the conclusion of some special project work, a further reduction from 10 to 9 would be made in 2020.

RESOLVED

That the trialled Duty System for Group Managers be implemented as a substantive duty system.

24 Work experience programme – results of pilot project

Members received a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which provided feedback on the trial work experience programme that had operated 1 – 5 April 2019 for 25 students, aged 16 – 19 years from across the county.

It was reported that the overwhelming feedback from the participants and participating colleges was positive and it was now proposed that, subsequent upon a number of minor amendments, the work experience programme be introduced on a twice-yearly basis. Costs associated with the project would be met from within current budgetary provision.

RESOLVED

- a) That the feedback on the pilot work experience programme be noted; and
- b) That a one-week work experience programme be implemented on a twice-yearly basis (April and November).

25 Operations Support - restructure

The Director of Service Support submitted a report which sought approval for a restructure of the Operations Support department to better meet the Team's priorities and to address future demands.

Members were advised that the restructure would be at an additional cost of £118,441 per annum which would be financed by a permanent transfer from the contingency budget to revenue.

RESOLVED

That the Operations Support department be restructured as detailed in the report now submitted.

26 Procurement Team - restructure

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Finance and Procurement Officer which sought approval for a restructure of the procurement team in order to implement a new operating model which had been developed subsequent upon the recommendations of a Local Government Association peer review of the procurement processes.

It was reported that the review of procurement was well advanced and had resulted in amendments to the Authority's Constitution as approved in June 2019. The restructure was now proposed to implement the further changes recommended by the review.

Members were advised that two new posts would be created, one of the two existing part-time posts within the Supplies team would be deleted and the second would be transferred elsewhere within the Finance team structure. The proposals would require growth of £92,328 which would be met by a permanent transfer from the contingency budget.

RESOLVED

That the restructure of the Procurement team be approved as detailed in the report now submitted.

27 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) instructor post

Members considered a report of the Director of Service Delivery which sought approval for a fixed-term USAR instructor post to be made permanent.

Business requirements associated with the National Resilience team required that the previous fixed-term contract arrangements for the instructor post were no longer appropriate and it was proposed that it be added to the establishment on a permanent basis. Full cost recovery of £22,114 (including oncosts) would be made through Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service as the coordinating service for all National Resilience training.

RESOLVED

That the temporary post of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) instructor be made permanent as detailed in the report now submitted.

28 Yorkshire and Humberside Employers' Association Minutes – 4 July 2019

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Yorkshire and Humberside Employers' Association at a meeting held on 4 July 2019 be received.

Chair