



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 09 July 2021

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Birkenshaw

Present: Councillors F Shaheen (in the Chair), G Almas, R Downes (items 1 – 10 only, Min nos, 1 – 10 refer), D Kirton, M Midgley, N Mohammed, M Pollard (as substitute for Councillor P Harrand), M Pervaiz, S Press and I Sanders (as substitute for Councillor C Anderson)

In Attendance: Councillor J Sunderland (by remote COVID measures in observer capacity only)

Apologies: Councillors C Anderson and P Harrand

1 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 26 March 2021 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2 Matters arising

None.

3 Urgent items

None.

4 Admission of the public

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

5 Declarations of interest

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

6 Apprenticeship update (public sector duty) 2020 – 21

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which provided an update on progress towards meeting the Public Sector Apprenticeship Duty.

Members were advised that West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service had exceeded the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target by 1% for the 2019 – 20 financial year (a total of 3.3% of employees had engaged with apprenticeships across the organisation).

It was reported that the schemes were continually monitored to ensure that their benefits were balanced against the impacts on the organisation and on individuals and one scheme in particular was the subject of a detailed review (Level 5 leadership).

Members sought and received further clarification on the following issues;

- Variation in use of levy funds throughout the year
- Detail and purpose of Level 5 leadership apprenticeship programme
- Bespoke coaching and mentoring for BAME employees

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7 Human Resources activity report

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which advised of the establishment and strength of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service together with directorate / departmental sickness absence and personnel activity to the end of March 2021.

Members raised the following specific issues;

- Reduction in sickness figures over previous year in spite of COVID pandemic and possible link to flexible working
- Reduction in Musculo-skeletal injuries during the year – possible link to reduction in training exercises during the pandemic
- Apparent large percentage of “not known” in figures relating to ethnicity – reliant upon individual employees updating their own HR Access records
- Binary choice in gender category – work was ongoing to update the system to allow for other categories
- Future of hybrid working – balancing the needs of the organisation and the individual
- Contingency arrangements for a potential increase in absenteeism after 19 July and impact of revised self-isolation rules

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8 Equality data monitoring report 2020 – 21

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which provided an overview of the gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and disability data within the staff profile.

Members congratulated staff on the excellent report whilst recognising that the challenges and cultural change the organisation faced were reflected nationally.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9 Core code of ethics

Members received a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which advised of the launch by the National Fire Chiefs' Council of a core code of ethics on 18 May 2021 and how this would be integrated into the organisation.

It was reported that the code supported a consistent approach to ethics and behaviours across all fire and rescue services and Members were provided with a detailed examination with examples of how West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's own values and behaviours mapped against the new core code.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10 Review of wholetime recruitment process

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which provided a review of the wholetime recruitment process 2020 – 21 and the positive action taken to allow the courses to continue during the pandemic. It was reported, however, that during this time not all planned positive action initiatives had been carried out in advance of recruitment opening due to COVID restrictions.

Members were further advised that changes had been made to the programme including the removal of the requirement to have a driving licence before application and the deletion of some online testing (including situational judgement tests) – both of which had been shown to have a negative impact on applicants from a minority ethnic background. The recruitment of females onto training courses had been particularly successful this year.

It was reported that some of the physical barriers to female recruitment, such as strength testing, had been reduced through, for example, engineering solutions and working closely with those candidates who just failed to reach the required standard to offer additional support and development.

Members raised the following issues;

- Targeting of potential candidates at a younger age
- Work with BAME communities – boot camps and gym sessions had been arranged to target under-represented groups in each cohort
- Keeping in touch with those who did not succeed on first application
- Community work to change perception, particularly amongst the BAME communities, of the role of a firefighter
- Age profile of the workforce and maintenance of fitness levels (including negative impact on pensions for female firefighters)

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11 Community engagement and positive action officer – role extension

Members received a report of the Chief Employment Services Officer which sought approval for the extension of the Community engagement and positive action officer role to August 2023.

It was reported that the secondment role had been created to support the wholetime recruitment process and the retention and progression of under-represented staff. Members were advised that the current postholder, through community engagement and outreach work, had implemented changes and new initiatives which had impacted positively on the 2020 recruitment drive despite limitations and restrictions in place due to the COVID pandemic. This work needed further development and long-term strategies were required for future recruitment activity and to ensure that West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service delivered its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

There was no budgetary provision for the role and all costs would be met from contingencies.

RESOLVED

That the Community engagement and positive action officer role be extended for an additional two years to August 2023.

12 Local Pension Board – annual report 2020 – 21

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which invited Members to review and ratify the Local Pension Board Annual Report 2020 – 21.

RESOLVED

That it be confirmed the Local Pension Board had acted within its Terms of Reference and in accordance with good governance principles during the 2020 – 21 municipal year

Chair