



Minutes

Human Resources Committee

Date: 25 March 2022

Time: 10:30

Venue: Function Room, FSHQ

Present: Councillors F Shaheen (in the Chair), G Almas, P Harrand, M Midgley, N Mohammed, M Pervaiz, M Pollard (as substitute for Cllr Kirton), S Press and I Sanders (as substitute for Cllr Anderson)

In Attendance: None

Apologies: Cllrs C Anderson, R Downes, D Kirton and J Sunderland

34 Minutes of meeting held on 21 January 2022

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 January 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

35 Matters arising

None

36 Urgent items

None

37 Admission of the public

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

38 Declarations of interest

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

39 Job Evaluation and Grading Structure

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which proposed changes to the job evaluation and grading structure to ensure WYFRS continues to pay above the Real Living Wage and to improve the competitiveness of the salaries. The Chief Employment Services Officer gave a brief verbal update on research done into benchmarking data which showed that WYFRS is paying substantially below the lower quartile figures available.

Members requested further clarification of why WYFRS service pay is so low comparatively and it was confirmed that historically no benchmarking had been done and that steps were being taken to address this. The Chief Employment Services Officer confirmed that discussions with Unison are ongoing, and any amendments made would be subject to their approval. Further information was sought and given regarding the market supplements being paid and the robust processes in place to approve these.

It was noted that the changes proposed in the report only effected Green Book Staff as Firefighter pay is outside control of the Authority and that the FBU Firefighter pay claim was still outstanding. It was further confirmed that the forecasted pay detriment and pay protection did not affect one grade and was consistent across the grading structure.

Members thanked the Chief Employment Services Officer for such a detailed report and acknowledged that staff retention and recruitment are very important in today's financial climate and were grateful these changes had been included in the budget.

RESOLVED

That the amendments proposed in the report, including reducing the number of grades and adjusting the job evaluation scheme, are adopted with immediate effect.

40 Establishment Changes

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report jointly with the Chief Finance and Procurement Officer which proposed changes to the establishment, to ensure that WYFRS continues to deliver its key priorities and high levels of service.

The Chief Employment Services Officer requested to add the following additional post to the ones listed in the report:

Directorate	Post	Change	Justification	Cost
Service Delivery	Fire Protection Training & Support Administrator	1 x WTE Grade 2	Convert current Fixed term contract to permanent position,	25,593

It was also explained that provision had been made in the budget for these posts and that all new posts are scrutinised by Management Board prior to commencement.

Members welcomed the report and acknowledged that administration roles are the foundation of the Authority allowing other staff to remain focused on their day-to-day roles.

RESOLVED

That the amendments to the establishment proposed in the report be approved.

41 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 December 2021. It was brought to members attention that it had been a difficult 2 years with high sickness absences due to Covid and that the issues continued. Staff absence as at the day of the meeting was 7.9% of which 35% were Covid related. However, the Chief Employment Services Officer was pleased to report that the absences were not affecting operational services.

Members requested the following:

- That a more up to date report could be circulated at future meetings
- That a breakdown of mental health and wellbeing figures could be provided
- Clarification of the current rules enforced by WYFRS relating to Covid and self-isolation

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the amendment to the establishment be approved.

42 Wholetime Recruitment Update

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which advised of the new and improved Wholetime Fire Fighter Recruitment Process and provided an update on the situation regarding Wholetime Fire Fighter numbers.

The key features of the new process which started in November 2021 are:

- Recruitment will take place 3 times per year but recruiting smaller numbers. This hopefully will allow the on-going positive action work to show some reward sooner rather than having to wait a full year for people to reapply.
- Advertising is targeted on social media (thinkology) and focusses on people from under-represented groups. No other general advertising takes place although the website is clear about recruitment and how to apply, for everyone. General enquiries are directed to the website for information on how to register their interest.
- Anyone interested in applying for a position as WT Fire Fighter is required to register their interest to attend an awareness day.
- Only those who applicants who attend an awareness day are then invited to apply for a Whole Time Fire Fighter position.

- Previously all awareness days took place at HQ. These days have now moved out to District, and District teams and Crews manage the process with support from the Training Department and the HR team.
- Places on awareness days are allocated as:
 - 40% white male
 - 30% female
 - 30% BAME
- On-call colleagues do not have to attend an awareness day in order to enter the process – they are able to automatically progress to the assessment and interview stage.

The report confirmed that the successful applicants for the June 2022 course have now been selected and are the most diverse group since recruitment commenced in 2017. It was noted that the numbers of successful applicants not attending their awareness day was disappointing and that further research into the reasons for non-attendance would take place to address this in future.

Members welcomed the positive news and excellent report but noted there was still work to be done to address recruitment from low socio-economic backgrounds. Members also suggested that alternatives to Microsoft Teams interviews and advertising solely on social media should be investigated. Members requested clarification of the methodology used to select candidates for the awareness days which it was confirmed are offered on a first come first served basis in accordance with the allocation of ethnicity outlined in the report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

43 Gender Pay Gap Report

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report which provided an update of the gender pay gap data for the year ending 31 March 2021 and the actions being taken to close the gap.

The report explains that a “gender pay gap” shows the difference in the average hourly earnings of men and women, which is expressed as a percentage of men’s earnings. WYFRA has a gender pay gap of 11.3%, which is a further reduction of 0.3% from the 2020 figure of 11.6%. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published a national pay gap figure of 15.4% (October 2021). This means that the WYFRA pay gap continues the trend of tracking lower than the national figure, by some 4.1% this year, but the team acknowledge that whilst this is encouraging there is still more to do. WYFRA is confident that its gender pay gap does not stem from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work, but that the gap is the result of the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.

Members commented that the gender pay gap for green book staff was showing “job done” but that similar outcomes for operational staff would be slow progress, although there were some positive news stories with more women being appointed to senior operational roles.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

44 Government Kickstart Scheme Update

The Chief Employment Services Officer submitted a report to inform committee members of WYFRS's participation in the Government Kickstart Scheme to support young people aged 16 to 24 who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.

It was confirmed that appointments have been made to four positions to start before the deadline of 31 March 2022:

- Employment Services Assistant (working between HR, Organisational Development and Diversity and Inclusion teams)
- IT Project Assistant (working with SM Matt Wolski on delivering the Gartan rostering project)
- Hydrant Technician Assistant (working with the water team)
- Youth Intervention Assistant (working with the Youth Interventions team particularly around social media)

Members received the report positively.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

45 Minutes of the Yorkshire and Humberside Employers' Association

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Yorkshire and Humber Employers' Association meeting held on 13 January 2022 be noted.

Chair