

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Standards and Human Resources Committee  
held on Monday, 3 December 2018, at 2.00 pm in the  
Oak Room at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Adams (Chair), Dee (Vice Chair), Hosken, Jones, Murray and Wynn

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lisa Vickers	Human Resources Manager (Contracts)	HRMC
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Milner

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 15 May 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**5 Pension Board**

**5a Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 16 November 2018, be noted.

## 5b Annual Report

The CFO gave the following update.

In relation to its running of the various pension schemes for which it is responsible, the Public Service Pension Schemes Act 2013 (PSPA13) and the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/2734), places one specific legal requirement on the Fire Authority every year; that is the requirement to ensure that all members receive their Annual Benefits Statement (ABS) by 31 August each year. The Pension Board has received assurance from the Scheme Administrator that all ABS were sent to members within that timeframe.

An annual report, summarising all of the work undertaken by the Pension Board during 2018/19, will be brought to this Committee in March 2019.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the update given.

## 6 Committee Constitution and Training

This report brings the latest version of the Committee's constitution to the notice of its Members. It also asked Members to consider whether there is any training or development, which they wish to receive in order for them to fulfil their role on the Committee.

Members sought clarification on the standards related work that the Committee is expected to undertake. The HHRA agreed that Officers would highlight the standards element of work on the Committee's workplan and circulate this to Committee Members for consideration in relation to training.

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Note the constitution of the Standards and Human Resources Committee (attached at the appendix to the report); and
- b) Request that training on the Standards element of the Committee's work be considered by Officers.

## 7 Ethical Framework Matters

**Resolved** that the Committee note a review of the following documents and procedures has been carried out by Officers and no changes are currently required.

- Member Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure
- Code of Conduct Complaints Form
- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Form
- Dispensations Procedure

## 8 Cycle to Work Scheme

This report set out the method of operation of a Cycle to Work Scheme operated by the Fire Authority and recommended that Members agree to the benefits accrued to the Authority, local authority partners and the environment by supporting the introduction of the scheme to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The HHRA presented this report and advised that the Service had previously run a Cycle to Work Scheme. However, as this was 10 years ago, there is a need to refresh the Scheme. Previously On-Call employees were not eligible to join the Cycle to Work Scheme but this new Scheme will be open to all employees. The main risk associated with Scheme membership is an employee being unable to fulfil the terms of the Scheme agreement therefore any applications from employees on long-term sick leave or maternity leave will be considered on an individual basis. There has been initial interest in the Cycle to Work Scheme from 40 employees but it is expected that this will increase when the on-site roadshows are run.

Members felt that £100,000 seems like a large amount for the Scheme although it does cover 602 employees in total. The ACFO explained that the £100,000 is pump priming for the Scheme and it is recouped back from employees.

There was a lot of concern was raised by Members with regard to insurance for those people who choose to take up the Scheme. Members felt strongly that there should not be an onus on individuals to get their own insurance for this and that the Service should provide overall insurance cover for those who enter into the Scheme. The CFO explained that insurance would provide cover if the bicycle is stolen but the bikes are not owned by SFRS so it is not up to the Service to provide this insurance. Members responded that they fully appreciated this but felt that it was wrong to not provide individual cover for accidents, particularly as cyclists can be more vulnerable on the roads. The CFO responded that the Service is not required to provide any insurance. If it were provided for Cycle to Work Scheme participants this would set a precedent across the Service. The CFO further explained that officers are investigating the possibility of directing employees to reduced insurance through British Cycling.

Members asked if this was a national initiative or an in-house development. The CFO explained that it is part of a national initiative to encourage cycling.

Whilst Members commended the Scheme, they were also raised concerns about employees with underlying health issues that may be exacerbated by cycling and asked if medical data could perhaps, be collected when employees join the Scheme. The HHRA explained that Operational Staff do have regular medicals to ensure their fitness for duty. The CFO said that whilst medical checks could not be imposed on employees, they could be offered and the HHRA agreed to speak to Occupational Health about the provision of such checks.

Members asked for clarification about qualifying journeys, which must be involved in 50% of the cycle or equipment uses. The CFO explained that the 50% figure comes from HMRC guidance regarding eligibility for tax relief through the Scheme. Effectively 50% of the cycle or equipment use must be for journeys, or part of a journey, between the employees work place, or between one work place and another, in connection with the performance of the duties of the their employment.

The Chair commented that as employees are paid a salary and could purchase their own bicycles what was the benefit of offering this Scheme. The CFO explained that the Fire and Rescue Service will make money out of the Scheme, as those employees who join it are eligible for tax relief. The HHRA also explained that this then enhances the benefits offering for employees and helps to make SFRS a more attractive employer.

The CFO suggested that Officers would also speak to the Cycle to Work Scheme providers to see if they can offer any recommendations in relation to the insurance issues raised by the Committee.

**Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:**

- a) Note the report;
- b) Agree to setting up the scheme with Cycle Solutions;
- c) Agree to initially open the scheme twice in the first 12 months and then review;
- d) Set the upper limit of bike and accessory value at £1,000; and
- e) Agree that £100,000 be set aside from reserves for the scheme.

## **9 Living Wage**

This report explained what the Living Wage is and the implications of its implementation on Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service since it was introduced in 2015.

Members asked for clarification of the difference between the Living Wage and the National Living Wage. The HHRA explained that the Living Wage was created by a think-tank as an informal benchmark and called the same as the Government's National Living Wage. The Living Wage would have more relevance in other organisations where pay drops below the level of the National Living Wage. An imbalance between salaries has been created within SFRS due to national pay increases being applied in April and the Living Wage increasing in November.

Members asked what the significance of the Spinal Column Points (SCP) was. The HHRA explained that employees move up through the SCP until they reach the top of the payband and then remain on that rate of pay until the SCPs are realigned or they move to another position within the organisation.

Members felt that it was best to for the Service to go with the change that gave the highest increase to avoid it having to come back to the Committee in the future.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the Service's decision to reconsider the agreement to implement the Living Wage pay increases and to revert back to aligning Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's pay and grading structure with the National Joint Council pay scales and the National Living Wage.

## 10 People Strategy

This report provided an update on the changes that have been made to the People Strategy.

The HHRA presented this report and explained that both she and the ACFO had reviewed the People Strategy as neither had been involved in its original formulation. It has not been possible to show each individual change in Appendix A to the report as it was undecipherable so the key changes are set out at paragraph 5 of the covering report. Appendix B to the report shows the interlinking of the documents that sit underneath the People Strategy. These documents are not attached to the report, as it would be an overwhelming amount of documentation.

Members asked if the Service had any input into the national people strategy. The CFO explained that the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) does have a People strand, which is chaired by Ann Millington, Chief Executive Kent Fire and Rescue Service. The NFCC considered and agreed the national people strategy following consultation with fire and rescue services. The Framework document was checked by HMI during their recent inspection and was found to be much more coherent following its review by the ACFO and the HHRA.

The Committee acknowledge the work undertaken by officers on the People Strategy but questioned the need to have so many documents and to produce so much paper. The CFO explained that it is all necessary to evidence how national targets and initiatives are worked through from Government to this Service.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Note and familiarise themselves with the changes to the People Strategy.

## 11 Update on Occupational Health Provision

This report gave an update on the Occupational Health (OH) service supplied to Shropshire fire and Rescue Service by the current providers, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust, McClelland Centre (University of Worcester) and Shropshire Council (Occupational Health Physician).

The HRMC presented this report and highlighted the following issues:

- SFRS is trialling light therapy for individuals with PTSD
- There are issues with Did Not Attends but the Assistant Group Commanders are working to address this through FireServiceRota.
- Mental health is above musculoskeletal issues for the first time as the reason for initial referrals to OH, as shown on page 4 of the report.

Members asked what would trigger a management referral to OH. The HRMC explained that it could be because of an injury or sickness note for a long-term condition or a mental health issue. Member then asked if a breakdown of the type of mental health issues that led to referrals could be provided. The CFO explained that whilst Officers may look at this information it would be difficult to provide it to Members as the relatively small numbers involved may allow identification of the individuals concerned.

Members queried how much contact Operational staff have with asbestos given that its use is outlawed in this country. The HRMC advised that the effects of asbestos could occur up to 40 years after exposure to it. The DCFO further explained that involvement in an incident where asbestos is involved or suspected does trigger checks with OH, particularly as fire causes it to become more of a hazard.

Referring to mental health issues, Members commented that it was hard to determine if these were affected by a person's lifestyle or their job or maybe even their background. The HRMC explained that all staff could access support for mental health issues through the National Organisation of Staff Supporters (NOSS). A specialist clinical chartered psychologist can also be access for work-related issues or an individual is exhibiting suicidal tendencies. Initially staff are offered six sessions but this can be extended with agreement from the Service. The ACFO explained that TRiM training has been delivered with staff being trained to identify issues from exposure to trauma, both immediately and in the longer term.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

## **12 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Update**

This report provides a summary of the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group from October 2017 to October 2018.

The CFO advised that Councillor Sahota sits on the EDI Steering Group in his role as Equality and Diversity Champion but it may be useful if somebody from this Committee was also on the Group. The CFO also stated that he would day that SFRS is a national leader in this aspect as dyslexia is no longer a taboo issue within the organisation. The CFO felt that it was the same with visible disabilities but mental health is an area where the SFRS wants to improve. However, the Service is on track for this and will get there. LGBT is another area where the Service could improve but work needs to be undertaken to identify what the issues are in relation to this, for example is it recording of numbers.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

### **13 Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd.**

This report set out the progress made by Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd. from September 2017 to September 2018.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report and attached appendix.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....