

For Publication

**Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Policy and Challenge
Group
16 December 2015
Item No 4**

**MINUTES OF HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP
MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Present: Councillors P Downing (Chair), C Atkins, M Ayub and J Mingay

ACO Z Evans, SOC T Rogers, GC K Moores, WC S Daniels,
Ms J Burnett and Ms D Clarke

15-16/HR/018 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Waheed.

15-16/HR/019 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

15-16HR/020 Communications

There were no communications.

15-16/HR/021 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2015 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

15-16/HR/022 Human Resources Performance Monitoring 2015/16 Quarter 1 and Programmes to Date

ACO Evans submitted the report on Human Resources programme, projects to date and performance against Human Resources performance indicators and associated targets for the first quarter of 2015/16.

She advised that the Safety Critical Training project had been completed. From 1 May 2015, all operational and control roles were now subject to development rates of pay on initial appointment with electronic development programmes in place.

There were a number of exception reports for indicators during the first quarter of 2015/16.

The targets for both EQ1 (percentage of new entrants to the operational sector to be women (due to budget constraints this will be measured in relation to retained recruitment only)) and EQ2 (recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation) had not been met during the first quarter, as there had been no women or individuals from an ethnic minority background recruited during the reporting period.

Six women had submitted completed application for the RDS role: two had passed the written stage, two had passed the written and practical stage, one was awaiting interview and one had passed all stages and was waiting for medical clearance. It was hoped that this would positively impact on performance in future quarters.

ACO Evans reported that, when the targets were set in March 2016, a target for percentage of new entrants to whole-time positions would need to be considered. Positive action for the recruitment of women and minority ethnic firefighters in the Autumn of 2016 was being delivered now.

In response to a question, Ms D Clarke, Head of Human Resources, advised that focus groups had recently been held with female staff and the general consensus was that the working environment in the Service had improved considerably for women over the years.

Ms J Burnett, the Diversity Adviser, reported that one of the individuals involved in the focus group had volunteered to represent the Service at a recent Girl's Careers Day at Cranfield University.

ACO Evans highlighted continuing good progress against HR1 (the percentage of working time lost due to sickness), which, at 3.21% was out-performing the stretch target of 3.6%.

GC Moores, Training Centre Commander, gave an update on the training and development performance indicators which were not reaching target levels.

In relation to T1 (the percentage of station based operational staff that have attended an assessed BA course within the last two years), GC Moores advised that there had been data issues and members of staff on long-term sick and on modified duties had been included in the figures. Extra courses had been provided as required and there was now more flexibility in the nomination procedures. It was anticipated that performance would improve against this indicator in the second quarter.

In response to a question about attendance rates, GC Moores reported that the attendance rates were generally high, although the weekend courses were less well attended. He reassured Members that when individuals missed courses they were immediately nominated onto the next available course.

Performance against T3 (the percentage of station based operational staff that have attended Water First Responder course within the last three years) had been adversely affected as a number of courses had been cancelled as a result of the dry summer and performance should improve against this indicator during the wetter months.

T4 (the percentage of station based operational staff that have attended Compartment Fire Behaviour course within the last three years), as with the other indicators, related to a small number of individuals compared against a high target.

It was noted that T6 (percentage of station based operational Working at Height Operators that have attended a Working at Height recertification assessment within the last three years) was a new indicator.

T8(b) and (c) (percentage of Safety Critical Maintenance training programme completed by RDS Operational (b) and Control (c) personnel via PDRPro within last 12 months) were short of target with efforts continuing to improve the recording of safety critical training. The training system for Control had recently been reviewed and updated in preparation for the introduction of the new mobilising system.

The health and safety indicators H1 (number of serious accidents [over 28 days] per 1000 employees) and H2 (number of working days/shifts lost to accidents per 1000 employees [excluding Retained Duty System employees]) were both red for the quarter as the result of one accident resulting in 46 days lost when a wholetime firefighter slipped on a fire station floor during routine activities.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on Human Resources Programmes and Performance be acknowledged.

15-16/HR/023 Health and Safety Annual Report 2014/15

SOC Rogers presented the Service's Health and Safety Annual report for 2014/15. There had been a significant reduction in the amount of time lost as a result of workplace accidents during the year and the number of vehicle collisions.

The Service held a RoSPA Platinum Level 4 Award following an audit in January 2014 and was continuing to put the recommendations made in the audit report in place. The value of putting the Service thorough another audit, given the high level of resources required and the limited number of staff in the Health and Safety Team, was discussed.

Safety Critical Bulletins had been published during the reporting period on hydraulic retarders and disc brakes and fire hydrants – bolted plastic/nylon outlets. Information that was not safety critical included Critical Update Messages which were distributed through the LearnPro system. There had also been 12 Critical Update Messages during the reporting period.

SOC Rogers reported on the use of active monitoring in the Service. This was a proactive method of measuring safety performance against set standards. This was also carried out at operational incidents such as the recent fire at Richbell Court in Bedford's Harpur Ward. The fire on the 14th floor had been contained quickly and the operation had seen the successful work with a number of partners including the Police, Ambulance Service and BPHA.

RIVO was used as part of the formal debriefing system following operational incidents.

RESOLVED:

That the Health and Safety Annual be received and that it be noted that, as a result of the significant amount of work undertaken by the Service to promote and improve health and safety in the organisation, Members requested that the high level of reassurance they felt in reading this report be recorded.

15-16/HR/024 Third Annual Report on the Public Sector Equality Duty

Ms J Burnett, the Diversity Adviser, presented the third annual report on the Public Sector Equality Duty and reported on progress made against the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan.

She drew Members' attention to the positive action activities carried out by the Service. This included the focus groups with women firefighters discussed earlier in the meeting and the Faith Based Football Programme.

She commented that the work undertaken within the organisation had both an internal and external focus.

The Service also maintained a list of over 100 individuals who were female or from minority backgrounds that the Service were able to engage with.

ACO Evans reported that the actions arising from the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2015/16 covered all of the Service's functional areas and that work to progress equality was embedded across the organisation.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted report be received and the work done to embed equality across the Service be recognised.

15-16/HR/025 Findings from the Employee Survey 2014/15

Ms J Burnett, the Diversity Adviser, submitted the results of the Employee Survey 2014/15. There had been an increase from the previous survey in 2011/12 in almost every survey area.

The increase on positive responses around worklife balance from 37% to 65% was noted and ACO Evans advised that the previous survey had taken place during the time when the change to 24 hour shift patterns was being consulted on.

She drew Members' attention to the high percentage of employees who, having had an appraisal, agreed that their appraisal was properly conducted (91%) and identified clear targets for them (85%). Both these figures had increased significantly in comparison to the previous survey.

Ms D Clarke, Head of Human Resources, reported that the percentage of appraisals completed was now over 90% throughout the Service.

Ms Burnett advised that one of the areas of consideration arising from the survey results was that there had been an increase in the percentage of employees who disagreed that they were normally treated fairly at work in relation to age, disability and race/colour/ethnic origin/nationality. Further work would need to be undertaken to determine whether this was contextual or if there were any issues that needed to be addressed.

There had also been an increase in the percentage of employees who felt that they were treated unfairly because they belonged to a union.

Members were advised that Employee Surveys reflected the climate at the time and required triangulation for action. This survey had taken part during a National Dispute.

In response to a question, ACO Evans advised that taking part in training for the marauding terrorist firearm team had recently been removed from the mandate for action short of strike which was ongoing.

RESOLVED:

That the outcomes of the 2014/15 Employee Survey be noted and that the 2015/16 Action Plan be approved.

15-16/HR/026 Corporate Risk Register

SOC T Rogers presented his report on the Corporate Risk Register. There had been no updates to individual risk ratings relevant to Group since the last meeting.

He reported on the change to CRR25 (if operational personnel either individually or collectively at any or all levels do not meet the minimum level of competence to safely deal with the full range of incidents which may be encountered, then there is the potential to cause significant injury or even deaths to our staff). Electronic development portfolios had been introduced for all roles up to Service Operational Commander. A bespoke recovery plan for the restoration of critical training and development activities had been developed as part of the Service's business continuity arrangements. The risk had been reduced from 5 to 4 accordingly.

Members were reminded that the recent audit of the Service's Business Continuity and Risk Management had resulted in a green audit opinion.

It was suggested that paper copies of the Corporate Risk Register no longer be circulated at meetings of the Group and that this information be displayed on the screen at the front of the room.

RESOLVED:

1. That the development of the Service's Corporate Risk Register in relation to Human Resources be noted and approved.
2. That the Group no longer receives paper copies of the relevant extracts from the Corporate Risk Register and that this information be displayed on the screen at the meeting.
3. That the other Policy and Challenge Groups and the Audit and Standards Committee consider implementing (2) above at their meetings.

15-16/HR/027 Work Programme 2015/16

Members received the Work Programme for 2015/16. It was noted that the Health and Safety Annual Report would need to be removed from the Work Programme for the December meeting of the Group as it had been considered at this meeting.

It was suggested that, in addition to the scheduled programme of station visits, which were open to all Members of the Authority, a tour of all the stations, to take place in one day, should be arranged for Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Work Programme be received.
2. That the Fire and Rescue Authority consider a Members' station tour.

15-16/HR/028 PDR Pro Demonstration

Watch Commander Daniels, Development Support, provided a demonstration of the PDRPro and LearnPro systems. These had initially been introduced into the Service in 2005 to run alongside paper training records.

PDRPro was redesigned in 2010 to improve its interactivity and ease of use. LearnPro was the e-learning module software. Modules were developed in-house and were added to the system as required.

Employees had an individual logins to access their own home pages. The home page showed all the training required for the attainment and maintenance of the competencies required for the job role. This was separated into sections for sub-roles and training activities and showed attainment status. Flags highlighted when training was required within the next six months.

A column had recently been introduced listing all the centrally delivered training run by the Training Centre.

Although individual employees were able to create and amend their records on PDRPro, the Training Centre held all the genuine training records in the event of any discrepancies.

It was noted that all the training on the home page was the safety critical training which was recorded in the performance indicators submitted quarterly to this Group.

GC Moores advised that Captivate was being used to introduce more video and audio into the training modules and to develop a library of case studies.

In response to a question about liaison with local authorities and care homes about fire safety training and fire prevention, ACO Evans advised that DCFO Ranger should be approached to discuss where there might be links between Prevention and Protection and care homes.

GC Moores stated that the e-learning platforms were designed to underpin the competencies required and that practical assessment also took place during specialist courses, operational incidents and simulations.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

The meeting finished at 11.52am.