

**MINUTES OF HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP  
MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Present: Councillors Y Waheed (Chair), C Atkins, T Khan, R Saleem, and J Mingay

ACO Z Evans, SOC A Peckham, AC D Cook and Ms D Clarke

16-17/HR/14 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

16-17/HR/15 Election of Vice Chair 2017/18

Councillor Saleem proposed, and Councillor Atkins seconded, that Councillor Mingay be elected as Vice-Chair of the Policy and Challenge Group for the remainder of 2017/18.

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Mingay be elected as Vice-Chair of the Policy and Challenge Group for the remainder of 2017/18.

16-17/HR/16 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

16-17/HR/17 Communications

ACO Evans provided an update on the national pay negotiations. The original offer from the employer's side was an initial 2% increase backdated to July 2017 with further discussions around the broadening of the role of a firefighter leading to a potential 3% additional increase.

This offer had been rejected by the membership of the FBU and a revised offer of a 1% increase with a commitment to ongoing discussions had been made by the employer's side. The FBU had not yet responded to the revised offer.

As a result of this, the decision of the FBU Executive Council is that the trials of EMR (co-responding) shall cease pending negotiations for an approved offer.

A full update would be provided to Members at the meeting of the Authority on 20 October 2017.

Councillor Atkins reported that she had only recently begun receiving communications from the Home Office in her role as Chair of the Authority. She would circulate these on to all Members of the Authority for information.

## 16-17/HR/18 Minutes

In response to requests made at the previous meeting, ACO Evans advised that, in relation to Minute 17-18/HR/007 (Human Resources Performance Monitoring Year End Report and Programmes to date) the number of staff, as well as the percentage relating to performance indicator EQ2 (recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation) was now included in the exception report for information.

Further to Minute 17-18/HR/010 (Absence Year End Report), Members had requested comparative data for the number of informal and formal written warnings that had been issued to members of staff. In 2015/16, 43 informal written warnings and 8 formal written warnings had been issued. This was in comparison to 51 informal written warnings and 8 formal written warnings issued in 2016/17.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2017 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

## 16-17/HR/19 Human Resources Performance Monitoring Quarter One and Programmes to date.

ACO Evans submitted the performance for the first quarter of 2017/18 against the Human Resources programme, projects to date and Human Resources performance indicators and associated targets.

The HR & Payroll project was RAG rated as Amber as a result of cost overruns and compatibility issues. There had also been a high level of staff turnover. Stage 1 of the project was expected to be signed off at the end of September or the beginning of October.

ACO Evans highlighted the positive performance against HR1 (the percentage of working time lost due to sickness). She reminded Members that this had been reporting as Red at the end of 2016/17 and that performance continued to be closely monitored.

Following Councillor Downing's suggestion that the Service could look at reimbursing members of staff who wished to arrange a flu vaccination privately, ACO Evans reported that the introduction of an e-voucher system to enable employees not eligible for a free flu vaccination to be reimbursed was being considered. This was on the back of the World Health Organisation predicting a significant impact of winter flu as seen in Australia and recognition that the flu vaccine had been successful against the strain. The situation would continue to be monitored.

Members acknowledged the inclusivity of the current whole-time recruitment campaign. Targeted positive action events had been held to encourage applications from under-represented groups and to improve the diversity of the Service workforce so that it was more representative of the local communities in Bedfordshire.

The Service had worked closely with Bedfordshire Police to learn from the Police's recent recruitment campaign that had been successful in attracting a high number of BAME applicants.

One of the challenges facing the Service in increasing the diversity of its workforce was the lack of whole-time recruitment campaigns between 2009 and 2015. There had also been no

national campaign focusing on the broadened role of the modern firefighter, including the increased focus on prevention and educational activities.

The diversity of the Service's Cadets, particularly in Luton, was recognised, and ways to facilitate the route towards a career in the Service for committed Cadets was being explored.

It was noted that two of the recent whole-time recruits were former Cadets.

SOC A Peckham reported on performance against the equality and training indicators.

EQ1a (percentage of new entrants to the Retained Duty System to be women) had missed its target as there had been one RDS recruits course in July and this had one female on it. Another course was planned for October and four females were being processed through the system. This should result in increased performance in future quarters, subject to the successful completion of the recruitment process.

EQ1b (percentage of new entrants to the whole time operational duty system to be women) had only just missed target by 0.44%. Positive action events were being planned and female firefighters had applied to transfer into the Service from other Services. The successful transfer in of a female applicant would make a significant difference to the performance against this indicator.

EQ2 (recruitment of black and minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation) had missed its target of 14%. Recent support vacancies had generated interest from BAME applicants; however, none of the applicants had successfully progressed through to the interview stage.

The majority of training indicators had met or exceeded their targets, with the exception of T3 (percentage of station based operational staff that have attended Water First Responder course within the last three years), T5 (percentage of station based operational Emergency Care for Fire and Rescue trained personnel that have attended a requalification course within the last three years), T6 (percentage of station based operational Working at Height Operators that have attended a Working at Height recertification assessment within the last three years), and T8b (percentage of Safety Critical Maintenance training programme completed by RDS operational personnel via PDR Pro within last 12 months).

T3 had missed its target by 2%. This related to 14 personnel, 13 of whom had already been nominated on forthcoming courses. The remaining individual had now been identified and would be nominated for a future course.

T5 had missed its target by 7%. This represented three stations and/or watches that required more qualifying personnel. The Service was considering running an additional training course for these personnel.

T6 had missed its target by 3% or 13 personnel. Six had been nominated for future courses and the remaining seven had been identified and would be nominated for future courses.

T8b was 2% off target but was an improvement of 1% from the end of year performance figure and performance was above the five-year average. Publication of new operational documents had increased the learning and assessment requirements. Support was in place for individuals and managers to ensure improvement was maintained.

In response to a question, ACO Evans advised that, at this moment in time, it was not anticipated that performance against the training indicators would be adversely affected by the ongoing national negotiations on pay and conditions.

The Group noted that there was strong performance against all the health and safety indicators which had exceeded their targets for the reporting period.

**RESOLVED:**

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

16-17/HR/20 Audit and Governance Action Plans Monitoring Report

ACO Evans introduced the report on progress made to date against current action plans arising from internal and external audit reports.

Extensions to the completion dates for two low priority actions arising from the internal audit of Governance, Transparency and Decision Making from July 2017 to 31 March 2018 were being requested due to capacity issues in the HR Team.

Work to update the website to include all staff in the top three levels of the organisation and to publish a list of responsibilities and details of bonuses and 'benefits in kind' for all employees whose salary exceeded £50,000 would be completed during 2017/18.

All other actions listed in the report were completed or in progress for completion by the agreed completion dates.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That progress made to date against the action plans be acknowledged.
2. That the requests for extensions to completion dates for actions arising from the audit of Governance, Transparency and Decision Making be approved.

16-17/HR/21 Annual Report of Provision of External Training

SOC A Peckham provided Members with an overview on the external training provision within the Service. He advised that there had been a managed budget reduction of 50% for external training in the last five years from £414,500 in 2010/11 to £219,300 for 2016/17.

Members were assured that the Service continued to fully support the training and development of all staff and delivered on all its training requirements.

The report included information on the training types and providers, as well as outlining the training provided through the Fire Service College. All new whole-time recruits were trained through the Fire Service College. Training for new RDS staff was provided internally.

In response to a question on the increased spend on driver training, the Group was advised that driver licensing requirements had changed. Individuals with drivers licences issued after a certain date required training to enable them to pass an additional driving test to receive entitlement to drive the category of vehicles including those that pulled trailers.

SOC A Peckham emphasised that the Service was committed to continuing professional development. Of a total of 127 applications for external training, learning and development, all

but three were supported and approximately 100 members of staff were currently enrolled in a formal development programme at the present time.

It was requested that a visit to the Fire Service College be arranged for all Members of the Authority. This could take place whilst recruits to the Service were undertaking their foundation training.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be received.
2. That a visit to the Fire Service College be arranged for Members.

16-17/HR/22 Health and Safety Annual Report

AC D Cook presented the Service's Health and Safety Annual Report for the year 2016/17 to the Group. He drew the Group's attention to the following:

- The Service continued to prioritise the management of health and safety.
- 25 new risk assessments had been added to the library and 92 risk assessments reviewed during the reporting period.
- 25 new Provision and use of Work Equipment (PUWER) assessments had been completed and 238 existing assessments had been reviewed during the reporting period.
- Footage obtained from vehicle mounted CCTV system had been viewed on 59 occasions, 36 of which were to support vehicle collision investigations.
- The number of workplace accidents had significantly reduced from 84 in 2015/16 to 52 in 2016/17.

In response to a question, AC D Cook reported that more vehicle collisions occurred at Luton Fire Station than at any other station as there was a higher vehicle movement rate at the station given its location, the number of rescue appliances based there and the number of emergency calls it responded to.

It was noted that the report provided the Group with a high level of assurance of the Service's management of health and safety issues.

Members commented on how easy the document was to read. Thanks was given to Darren Cook and the Health and Safety Team for producing the document and all the work documented within it.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Health and Safety Annual Report 2016/17 be acknowledged.

16-17/HR/23 Corporate Risk Register

AC D Cook presented his report on the Corporate Risk Register. There had been no changes and two updates to risks within the Corporate Risk Register relating to Human Resources.

The risk rating for CRR40 (if there is a retirement of a large number of operational officers over a short period of time then we lost significant operational and managerial experience within the service which could ultimately affect our service delivery and wider corporate functionality in the shorter term) had been updated as a new recruitment process had commenced in August 2017. The successful candidates would be eligible for foundation training in 2018.

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, particularly areas of competencies relating to:- Incident Command- Use of Breathing Apparatus – Compartment Fire Behaviour – Water related Incidents – High-Rise Incidents – Work at Height- then there is the potential to cause significant injury or even deaths to our staff) had also been updated as 13 new firefighters attended the foundation course at the Fire Service College in June 2017. Performance of all operational firefighters and managers was regularly monitored and reported through the respective indicators measuring performance against safety critical training activities. These had stretch targets for 2017/18. Senior management were offered leadership courses through CFOA and transfers-in also brought previous experience to the Service.

Ms D Clarke, the Head of Human Resources, advised that reports on workforce planning, including three and five year forecasts, were presented to the Service's Corporate Management Team on a regular basis. The Service also made plans for its ongoing assessment and development programme to prepare personnel for further progression within the Service.

**RESOLVED:**

That the review of the Service's Corporate Risk Register in relation to the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group be noted and approved.

16-17/HR/24 Work Programme 2017/18

Members received the updated Work Programme for 2017/18. The positive Action Report and the Public Sector Equality Scheme Review originally scheduled for the meeting had been postponed to the Group's next meeting in January 2018.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be agreed, subject to the annual report on the provision of external training and the Public Sector Equality Scheme review being deferred from the June 2018 meeting to the following meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.10 am