



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE held on Monday, 20 November 2023 at Fire Conference Room - Fire Service HQ, Clemonds Hey, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 2UA at 12.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Stef Nelson (Chair), Gina Lewis, Stuart Parker, Margaret Simon, Laura Smith and Peter Wheeler

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that this meeting would be audio recorded.

B Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Moreton and Karen Mundry (Councillor Laura Smith attended as a Substitute Member for Councillor Karen Mundry).

C Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

D Minutes of the Staffing Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Staffing Committee held on 10th August 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 ANNUAL WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE

The Group Manager, Organisational Performance presented the report which provided an update as of November 2023 of the current operational staffing levels and overview of the workforce planning process that was used to plan for and recruit the required number of operational firefighters.

It was noted that there had been an increase in staff leaving the Service to both external employers and other fire and rescue services who were facing similar issues with their retirement profiles. In the four-year period to 31st March 2027, it was anticipated that there would be approximately 111 leavers, which represented employee turnover of 28%.

In the last 12 months 38 appointments to wholetime firefighter roles had been made, with 27 leavers. Future recruitment was planned to fill 8 positions through an On-Call

Migration course in March 2024 and 12 positions on a Wholetime Recruits course in April 2024.

A Member asked how many female firefighters were now employed by the Service. In response, the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive advised that in total there were 72 female firefighters employed across the Service.

The latest round of promotion boards for Crew, Watch and Station Managers were completed in October 2023 which had resulted in 4 permanent Group Managers appointments, 10 permanent Station Manager appointments; 2 permanent Watch Manager appointments; and 14 permanent Crew Manager appointments.

The Chair asked that all Members received an update on 'Succession Planning and Talent Management' at the next Member Planning Day in January 2023.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Workforce Planning Update be noted.

3 DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE UPDATE

The Head of People and Organisational Development presented a report which provided an update on discipline cases, grievances, dignity at work complaints and performance improvement/capability procedures within the Service.

The Head reported that the discipline figures for 2022 showed a small increase when compared to those in 2021. Although, the data for 2023 was incomplete, there already appeared to be a significant increase in discipline cases compared with the previous years.

There had been a decrease in grievances submitted in the past two years, with the number of grievances submitted in 2023 looking like they had returned to pre-2022 levels.

A Members asked for clarity on conduct cases and what these involved. In response, the Head advised on the themes that conduct cases may involve, such as, external, or internal complaints, failure to adhere to health and safety regulations etc. Conduct cases had been under scrutiny at a national level since the HMICFRS published their spotlight report into values and culture in the fire and rescue service. The Service believed that it was taking a balanced approach to ensure that any serious breaches of conduct were dealt with robustly, whilst ensuring that the Service did not overuse the discipline procedures. The criticism within the spotlight report was that Services were not effectively using their procedures to tackle inappropriate behaviour.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Discipline and Grievance Update be noted.

4 PRESENTATION ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY 2022-25

The Head of People and Organisational Development gave a presentation which provided an update about developments associated with the People Strategy 2022-25 (the Strategy).

Members were informed that the Strategy was predicated on the 'Steps Framework' which now consisted of four main elements: Step In; Step Forward; Step Up; Step Away. An overview was provided in respect of each of the elements, confirming activities carried out to-date and future intended activity.

The presentation provided further information on the following:-

- 2023 a year of change;
- New Challenges in 2023;
- Step in – Recruitment and Training;
- Impact of Positive Action on our Workforce;
- Gender Split for Recruit Courses
- Work experience year 10's and year 12/13's;
- Performance and Development;
- Progression and Leadership;
- Workforce Planning and Retirement;
- 2024-25 People Priorities

A Member welcomed the work experience initiative and asked how this was publicised. In response, the Head of People and Organisational Development advised that the offer was communicated to local schools, and that details were published on the website and included in social media posts.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the People Strategy Update be noted.