

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE HR & EQUALITIES MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 10 JULY, 2023

HELD IN MEETING ROOM 8 OR REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

1. PRESENT:

Councillor	Left	Authority
A Roberts (Chair)		Rhondda Cynon Taff
K Carr (Deputy Chair)		Cardiff
G Holmes		Rhondda Cynon Taff
M Hughes		Bridgend
A Hussey		Caerphilly
S Melbourne		Cardiff
D Naughton		Cardiff
T Watkins		Newport
L Wright		Monmouthshire

APOLOGIES:

D Ali	Cardiff
A Best	Torfaen
C Elsbury	Caerphilly

OFFICERS PRESENT:- ACO A Reed – Director of People Services, ACO G Thomas – Monitoring Officer & Director of Corporate Services, Mrs L Shroll – Head of People Services, Mrs D Doel – HR Manager, Recruitment & Resourcing, Mrs K Davies – HR Manager, Absence Management, Mrs J Wells – HR Manager, Employee Relations, Mrs R Hazell – Occupational Health Nurse

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Each Member declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item which affected their Authority.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE NEW HEAD OF PEOPLE SERVICES**

The Chair extended a special warm welcome to Mrs Lisa Shroll, who had recently been appointed the new Head of People Services, and on behalf of Members wished her all the very best in her new role.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous HR & Equalities meeting held on 27 February, 2023, were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings.

5. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

5.1. RECRUITMENT & ATTRACTION 2022-2023

The HR Manager, Recruitment & Resourcing, presented a report which provided Members with an update in relation to ongoing Recruitment Attraction & Engagement Strategies.

RESOLVED THAT

5.1.1 Following a lengthy question and answer session on recruitment challenges within deprived areas, and capturing under-represented groups, Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

5.1.2 With reference to capturing the 16 to 18 year old age group following the Fire Cadets process, Officers agreed to consider an Apprenticeship Programme, and to provide Members with a report in due course.

5.2 ANNUAL REPORT ON SICKNESS DATA 2022-2023

The HR Manager, Absence Management, provided Members with an update on the sickness absence data for 2022/2023, which

provided an overview of musculoskeletal and mental health absences, rehabilitation roles, and ill-health retirements.

RESOLVED THAT

5.2.1 Following a question and answer session on the sickness statistics, Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

5.2.2 With reference to the increase in Mental Health Sickness cases and the number of related issues, Members agreed to note that further analysis would be carried out, and they would receive a report in due course.

5.3 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH UNIT ACTIVITY REPORT – 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

The Occupational Health Nurse informed Members that the Occupational Health Unit Activity Report covered the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The report provided data on services and expenditure, updates on Occupational Health initiatives, as well as an outline of strategic development.

RESOLVED THAT

Following discussion on the Occupational Health Unit and service delivery, it was noted that the Unit procures some of its services from the Private Sector in order to avoid delays in staff returning to the workplace, and the subsequent costs, Members agreed to note the content of the report.

5.4 FIREFIGHTERS PENSION SCHEMES – WALES GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS 2023-2024

The ACO People Services informed Members that under the terms of the Public Services Pension Act 2013, the Fire & Rescue Authority was the recognised Scheme Manager for Firefighters Pension Schemes.

Welsh Government issued regular communications to all Chief Fire Officers, Chairs, and Clerks of Fire & Rescue Authorities, electronically in a standard circular template. These emails and

circulars could cover a variety of areas, including all aspects of Firefighters Pension Schemes, and had to be noted or actioned as appropriate.

RESOLVED THAT

5.4.1 Members agreed to accept the Welsh Government Firefighters' Pension Scheme Circulars and emails that had been received in the year 2023/2024.

5.4.2 Members agreed to note the actions that had been implemented for each of the circulars.

5.5 ANNUAL REPORT ON GRIEVANCE & DISCIPLINE ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

The HR Manager, Employee Relations, provided Members with a summary of grievance and discipline matters investigated by the Resolution Unit during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

RESOLVED THAT

5.5.1 Following lengthy discussion, Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

5.5.2 With reference to concerns relating to the 13 grievances received from Corporate staff, Members highlighted the benefits of introducing a Hybrid Working policy for certain staff members,

5.6 FRS SPEAK UP

The ACO People Services presented a report which informed Members of the introduction of 'FRS Speak Up', which was a new confidential reporting service that was available to all staff should they wish to report a concern in relation to inappropriate behaviours or practices in the workplace.

RESOLVED THAT

5.6.1 Members agreed to note the launch of the new FRS Speak Up service that was launched on 6 April 2023.

- 5.6.2 Members confirmed that they were aware of the process for employees to raise a concern through the new service.
- 5.6.3 Members agreed to note the number of concerns raised since the service was launched.
- 5.6.4 Following a discussion on costs, Members agreed to note that they would receive a further report at the end of the year, which would include a breakdown on specific themes.

5.7 ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED 2023

The ACO Corporate Services presented to Members the inaugural report of complaints and compliments received by the Service.

Members were informed that the report would be presented to the HR & Equalities Committee on an annual basis and would identify the complaints and compliments received by the Service for the relevant financial year. This report focussed on the year 2022/2023.

The Head of Corporate Support advised Members that due to the sensitive nature and GDPR considerations, the complaints and compliments had been anonymised.

RESOLVED THAT

- 5.7.1 Members agreed to note the content of the report.
- 5.7.2 Following a question and answer on a breakdown of the 'Behaviours' category, Officers assured Members that all complaints were taken seriously, and a further report would be provided at the end of the year.

6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

The ACO People Services provided Members with the Forward Work Programme for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED THAT

- 6.1 Members agreed the content of the Forward Work Programme for 2022/2023.
- 6.2 Due to the increase in presenting several additional key reports, Members agreed that consideration would be given to a further HR & Equalities meeting would take place on 11 September, 2023
7. **TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 or 2)**

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.