



**AVON FIRE AUTHORITY
PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

5 OCTOBER 2022

MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT: Councillors Bromley, Davies, Hopkinson, Massey, Monk, Tucker and Wilcox (Chair).

The meeting started at 11.15am

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jacobs and Varney.

18. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The emergency evacuation procedures were explained.

19. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

20. PUBLIC ACCESS

None received.

21. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Members and Officers introduced themselves.

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the re-arranged meeting of the People & Culture Committee as the original meeting scheduled for 16 September 2022 had been postponed, due to the official mourning period. The agenda and papers were the same as those published for the original meeting.
2. The Chair confirmed that the meeting would take place as a face-to-face meeting. The meeting was being recorded and would be available for members of the public to view.
3. The Chair explained the voting system for the meeting, i.e., votes against a motion would be recorded first, followed by abstentions, then votes for.

22. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 MAY 2022

It was moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Massey that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

It was RESOLVED -

That the extraordinary minutes of the People & Culture Committee held on 18 May 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

23. MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 JUNE 2022

It was moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Bromley that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

It was RESOLVED -

That the ordinary minutes of the People & Culture Committee held on 9 June 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

24. HR AND RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Committee received a report from the Head of HR which updated on recruitment, trends and significant issues related to Employment cases and strategic people issues.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) recruitment and selection process concluded on 9 August. Elected Members awarded the role to Richard Welch from London Fire Brigade who accepted the job offer and will join the Service mid-October. This ACFO appointment will be ratified by the full Fire Authority at their meeting later on 5 October 2022.

Wholetime recruitment had not yet been concluded and a full briefing will be provided at the next Committee meeting. 626 applications were received in total which was slightly lower than in previous years. A breakdown of applicant types were provided in the report, however, some applicants choose not to complete the monitoring form, which is not compulsory. It was advised that work would continue to ensure that all applicants felt confident disclosing this information. The Head of HR added that the Service continues to strive to increase interest from under-represented groups.

It was confirmed that the Service Leadership Team (SLT) agreed a change to the strength test training element of the selection process. This was due to the weight of the ladders used within the Service being lower than previously advised. This amendment to the strength test could assist some categories of applicants and generate increased applications.

A Member enquired whether applicants, that were previously excluded in the recruitment process, would be advised of the reduction in the weight of the ladder. The Head of HR advised that data from the last two campaigns was retained, and these applicants would be contacted and encouraged to re-apply for the next recruitment campaign.

Cllr Tucker arrived at 11.35hrs.

A Member asked, following the recent statement from the CFO on the effects of the cost of living on staff, whether the Service has tested whether its job packages were attractive especially for different communities and gender. The CFO advised that the Service recently worked with Babbasa, an organisation to help inspire and support under-represented young people in Bristol, to find out their thoughts and feelings around a career in the Fire Service, and how we could best market roles and career opportunities. He added that the salary bands could be a barrier especially currently, some applicants had taken a salary decrease to take the role.

The Head of HR mentioned that applicants were still keen to be a firefighter even in the current economic climate. She added that other Fire & Rescue Services, public sector employers and recruitment agencies were also struggling to fill roles especially within more specialised Corporate departments. The Service also continued to face difficulties recruiting to a number of critical corporate staff roles and On-Call Firefighter vacancies.

It was advised that following feedback from staff in the recent Culture survey, SLT and Service Leadership Board (SLB) had developed a 'zero tolerance statement' in consultation with key stakeholders including Human Resources, Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE), Middle and Senior Managers and the Staff Engagement Network (SEN).

The Head of HR added that SLT had participated in a development session where they reviewed a past discipline case study and worked together to review the approach taken, decisions made, and outcome to assess consistency and any future changes required to the policies and processes surrounding employment cases.

A Member asked whether 'zero tolerance' was the correct term. The Head of HR replied that the statement was designed to ensure there is a clear expectation of behaviours. This statement is not a stand-alone document but aligns with other People policies and processes including the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics. The CFO added that the next steps would be to ensure the statement reflected the correct position and was a direct reflection on what our staff wanted and to show that SLB/SLT had listened.

**It was RESOLVED –
That the HR & Recruitment Update be noted.**

25. TRAUMA RISK INCIDENT MANAGEMENT (TRiM) UPDATE

The Committee received a report in respect of the Trauma Risk incident Management (TRiM) wellbeing support provision which provided details in relation to the TRiM referral process and the number of referrals made within i) the last quarter and ii) the 12 months (April 2021 – March 2022).

The Committee were informed that as of September 2022, the Health, Safety, Wellbeing, and Welfare (HSWW) team did not have a TRiM Manager due to the Manager in post leaving the role. However, the HSWW team had continued to deliver mental health support to all TRiM requests.

Members were informed that there were now two Health and Wellbeing Advisers in post, and this had enabled the HSWW to divide the TRiM workload into two primary roles: TRiM Manager and TRiM Co-ordinator with the TRiM Manager overseeing the TRiM process and TRiM practitioner provision and the TRiM Co-ordinator reviewing incident referrals.

The t/Health and Safety Manager advised that a new wellbeing adviser had started today, who would look after TRiM. She advised that support was provided to the TRiM practitioners to empower them and offer support, this included guidance notes, Face to Face training, videos and workshops.

In response to Member's questions:

1. It was confirmed that some staff decided that they did not require support after an incident but could change their mind. Crew Managers are made aware when help is required after a traumatic incident. The HSWW would also contact an individual to offer support and support is available to the crews on station.
2. It was confirmed that support was offered to crews who recently attended the fire at Twinnell House.
3. Regarding firefighter welfare and whether the team would be able to identify if someone had multiple experiences of incidents and ongoing trauma, it was confirmed that software could identify those that have attended multiple incidents. This was reviewed regularly and help is offered including identifying symptoms of poor mental health.
4. It was confirmed that the 13 TRiM practitioners were based across the whole service with one at every station. Recruitment was ongoing to attract more staff into this role.

The CFO clarified that TRiM is an intervention and an individual would be automatically allocated to a Welfare Manager after a traumatic incident. This would be triggered by a request or auto referral to HSWW within 7 days. Sometimes, an individual may need to process their thoughts after an incident, prior to receiving help. A 1:1 assessment with the individual would then take place. Support would be tailored to the individuals needs at the time and would be followed up with continual monitoring. Early intervention had been recognised within the military and the aim is to prevent long term PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and to prevent the situation getting to crisis stage.

It was RESOLVED –

That the findings outlined in the report concerning the TRiM referral process and the total number of referrals made be noted.

26. QUARTERLY TRAINING UPDATE

The Group Manager, Learning & Development (L&D), provided an update on Operational Training and Organisational Development.

The key points highlighted were:

1. The number of Breathing Apparatus (BA) re-qualification courses had been increased to reduce the back log created by COVID-19. It was confirmed that this backlog should be cleared by the end of November 2022. L&D are working with the Transformation team to create a new system which would ensure that the re-qualification, which is required every 24 months, begins earlier.
2. Grenfell – Phase 2 of training in response to the Grenfell Inquiry had been running since the beginning of July and would have been delivered to all front-line staff up to and including Assistant Chief Fire Officers by the end of September. E-learning packages had been introduced for phase 2 along with crew training in high rise buildings within Bristol, to teach new methods of firefighting including fire blankets placed in a doorway to reduce travelling smoke.
3. Hazardous Detection, Identification and Monitoring (HDIM) – a change in approach would soon take place. Crews from 04 Patchway, who were mobilised each time the asset attends an incident, would be upskilled to become HDIM limited operators. This 2-day course would enable them to set up and prepare the complicated equipment and to better assist the HDIM Officers at incidents. The training would be completed by the end of October. Therefore, if someone is exposed to a substance, the Service could provide a rapid response to the NHS and intervention would be quicker.
4. Apprenticeships - It was confirmed that the Service had 47 Firefighter apprentices, all from the last 2 Wholetime Recruit Schools. All apprentices are now on station and had an assessor appointed from Weston College.
5. Personal Development Review (PDR) – a procurement process was in place and 6 companies had tendered for the new system. An update would follow.
6. Leadership Academy - It was advised that plans were in place to launch AF&RS' Leadership Academy in April 2023. The Academy would enable the Service to identify talented staff, develop their leadership skills and encourage them to further their career into a leadership role.

In response to Member's questions, it was confirmed that every two years staff attended a two-day BA re-qualification which consisted of three assessments. The course was due for review in Jan-March 2023 and would be re-designed as appropriate. Further information was requested about the number of firefighters who required BA re-qualification courses in particular statistics for previous quarters and those on long-term sick if not included in previous reports.

A Member thanked Officers and commented that they were pleased that the apprenticeship scheme was moving forward with pace.

It was RESOLVED –

That the Learning & Development Quarterly Report was noted.

27. CULTURAL CHANGE UPDATE 2022

The Committee received a report of the Culture and Inclusion Manager (CIM) which provided a progress update on the Culture Change programme, actions taken to date in response to the areas for consideration as identified in the 2021 culture survey reports. The report also proposed the next steps forward for progressing our cultural journey following analysis of the data and information collated from both report findings and focus groups sessions.

The key points highlighted included:

1. Bullying and discrimination – several focus groups have taken place and results and ideas captured had been presented to SLT.
2. A People Services Forum had been set up and provided managers with tools to tackle inappropriate behaviours.
3. Since the last cultural change update, a first draft of the zero-tolerance statement had been distributed amongst key stakeholders across the Service asking for their appreciation of the content and to provide any feedback that should be considered before affecting the approach. Areas explored include whether zero tolerance should be a policy or a practice and how to launch the statement to staff.
4. The CIM continued to work closely with HR, Corporate Communications and the Transformation team. This included working on a suite of policies including the Behaviour Framework, which once launched, will be backed up with e-learning and DICE training.
5. The recent visit from Babbasa to Hicks Gate.
6. That quarterly snapshots would be introduced to capture any new arising issues.
7. The 2022/25 DICE strategy which included the Core Code of Ethics was almost completed and would be included within the agenda for the next meeting.

The CIM advised that going forward, he would continue to work with the People Services Forum, to communicate the importance of diversity within AF&RS, there was still some misunderstanding about matters such as the use of positive action.

In response to Members questions:

1. The CIM agreed that an aging workforce could be an issue for AF&RS. The largest age group is between 25 and 45 and older staff are leaving the organisation. He confirmed that the Service does review statistics and the changing profile of the organisation. The Service had also considered reasonable adjustments for our workforce such as the introduction of the new IT system, it was recognised that this could cause issues with some users. However, it is expected that new younger staff would help change our cultural journey and be able to change legacy issues and the profile of the organisation.

2. A question was asked as to when the Service would hold another Culture survey. The CIM responded that from the results of the surveys held in 2018 and 2021, the Service had collected sufficient knowledge about issues including legacy embedded behaviours. He felt that for the time being we had enough information as it would take time to work through issues. He added that the introduction of the quarterly snapshots would help, but he did not wish to launch a full survey too often. In addition, there had also been surveys completed in connection with the HMICFRS inspections with a further HMICFRS inspection due in 2023. The Member added that the Service should learn from the experiences of our new recruits and would like them to be contacted, after an appropriate time in Service, to obtain their feedback since joining the Service.

**It was RESOLVED –
That the Culture Change Update 2022 was noted.**

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Monk.

It was RESOLVED – that the date of the next meeting be held on 9 December 2022 at 10.30am.

29. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The recommendation was moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Davies.

**It was RESOLVED –
“That the public be excluded from the meeting during the following items of business on the grounds that they contain exempt information pursuant to Schedule 12A, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, and that in accordance with Schedule 12A, Part 2, paragraph 10 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”**

30. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 MAY 2022

It was moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Davies that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**It was RESOLVED -
That the confidential extraordinary minutes of the People & Culture Meeting held on 18 May 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.**

31. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 JUNE 2022

It was moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Bromley that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

It was RESOLVED -

That the confidential ordinary minutes of the People & Culture Meeting held on 9 June 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

32. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM TREASURER SUPPORT DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO) presented a report which provided an update on work undertaken in relation to the temporary arrangements to cover the Treasurer responsibilities during a period of absence.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Wilcox and seconded by Cllr Monk.

Chair

The meeting ended at 13.11pm