

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 16 December 2015 at 10.00 am

Present Councillors Busby (Chairman), Dransfield, Exon, Glover, Gomm, Huxley, Lambert, Mallen, Marland (part), Morris, Reed, Schofield, Watson (part), and Wilson

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development) D Sutherland (Director of Finance and Assets), G Smith (Head of Service Delivery), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), P Holland (Head of Service Transformation), D Melia (Station Commander HR Projects), M Ridder (Employee Relations Manager), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), F Pearson (Communication and Consultation Manager), E Andrews (Executive Assistant to Chief Fire Officer), A Chart (Health and Safety Manager), K Carmichael (Station Commander Gerrards Cross and High Wycombe Fire Stations), and N Boustred (Head of Training, Learning and Development)

Apologies: Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Clarke OBE, Vigor-Hedderly

FA27 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 14 October 2015, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA28 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Chief Fire Officer Paul Fuller from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting and also Mr Tim Revell (ADSO Regional Advisor).

The Chairman announced that he had spent an afternoon in the Control Room at South Central Ambulance Service, Bicester at the invitation of their Chairman Trevor Jones and found it very worthwhile.

Further Chairman's announcements are appended to these minutes.

FA29 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2015

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

RESOLVED –

That the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2016/17 be adopted.

FA30 PAY POLICY PRINCIPLES AND STATEMENT 2016/17

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity introduced the report and advised Members that the Pay Policy Principles and Statement had been revised and some minor amendments made.

The Director of People and Organisational Development informed Members that this paper would usually be brought to the February 2016 Fire Authority meeting, but as Members had already approved the proposals for apprenticeships, it was decided to get early approval for the Pay Policy Principles and Statement, so that any pay relating to apprenticeships was included in the policy for next year (although initially apprenticeships would be employed by an Apprenticeship Training Agency).

The current National Minimum Wage was £6.70 per hour and the National Living Wage, effective from April 2016 would be £7.20 (for ages 25 and over). The Authority would apply that minimum rate for all.

A Member stated that this was not the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation which had been adopted by many local authorities. The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised that the National Living Wage was set by the Government and therefore it was appropriate that it was used by the Authority.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that each year, as part of the annual review of support staff pay, the Authority looked at all rates of pay and benchmarked both locally and nationally and this would take place in the New Year; and as support staff pay was subject to local terms and conditions, levels of pay per role were looked at as opposed to just increasing the lowest rate.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the Authority had taken the National Living Wage for ages 25 and over for all, rather than the minimum age based apprenticeship rates which were lower. It was considered that by using the higher rate the Authority would attract the best apprentices.

A Member asked how many companies abided by the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation as opposed to the National Living Wage. The meeting was informed that the South East Employers were currently conducting a survey and the results would be communicated to Members.

Councillor Wilson moved the following recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Marland:

"That the Authority aim to introduce the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation and receive a further report to that end at a future meeting"

On being put to the vote the motion was declared lost.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Pay Policy Principles and Statement be approved as the statutory Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17;
- 2) that the requirement for an in-year review of the Pay Policy Principles and Statement with the introduction of the £95,000 cap on public sector exit payments be noted;
- 3) that the change to the National Minimum Wage, at a rate of £6.70 per hour, to the National Living Wage, at a rate of £7.20 per hour on 1 April 2016 be noted;
- 4) that the application of the National Living Wage as the lowest rate of pay for staff for financial year 2016/17 be approved.

Councillor Marland and Councillor Wilson indicated that their abstentions be recorded in the Minutes.

FA31

THE BLUE LIGHT PLEDGE

The Station Commander for HR Projects advised Members that The Blue Light Pledge was an initiative run by Mind, the mental health charity, in partnership with the blue light services; that the primary aim was to remove the stigma of mental health issues amongst emergency services workers; that 1 in 6 emergency service workers experienced mental health issues at any one time; and that mental health, including depression, stress and anxiety was the second highest reason for sickness absence within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA).

Members were informed that the BMKFA Corporate Plan 2015-20 incorporated a strategic aim 'to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people': a key measure of success arising from the effective implementation of this enabler was a reduction in sickness absence and a more productive workforce.

The Station Commander for HR Projects advised that BMKFA submitted its pledge document to Mind in September 2015; the submission detailed all the measures that would be taken by the Authority to support its staff around mental health issues; that twelve measures were put in place, six measures were mandatory and the Authority had included an additional six measures; and that the Authority's submission was considered to be very strong, which was very encouraging as the pledge document was based almost entirely on measures that the Authority already had in place.

The Director of People and Organisation Development advised Members that the Authority was one of the first fire services to sign the pledge which was for the Authority part of a broader initiative supported by training sessions, which had been very well received and attended.

A Member asked what other emergency services i.e. Police and Ambulance were doing. It was advised that the Authority's training sessions were open to all blue light services.

RESOLVED –

That the Blue Light Pledge be endorsed for signature by the Chairman of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive.
(Councillor Watson left the meeting)

FA32

GLOBAL CORPORATE CHALLENGE EMPLOYEE HEALTH, WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Employee Relations Manager advised Members that:

the Global Corporate Challenge (GCC) was a pilot initiative which took place through the summer of 2015 to promote the Authority's commitment to improve health and wellbeing for all its employees;

the GCC fitted well with the Authority's strategic aim within the Corporate Plan 2015-20 'to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people';

the Global Corporate Challenge was an employee wellbeing health initiative that also had a competitive element. There were 300K participants from 1200 companies from 185 countries around the world competing. BMKFA had 238 employees in 34 teams taking part. The aim was to improve health, fitness and wellbeing across the whole Service;

the initiative demonstrated the Authority's commitment to employee wellbeing which was clearly valued by employees who reported improved

engagement, wellbeing and motivation; and .

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority was the best participating fire and rescue service and also had the best individual team.

RESOLVED –

That the positive outcomes of the initiative be noted.

FA33

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk advised Members that it had been a really excellent year for the Authority in terms of the health and safety performance.

The Health and Safety Manager thanked the Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk for his continued support throughout the year.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that across all areas of the service there had been a continued improvement in health and safety; and that staff were encouraged to report health and safety issues without fear of reprisals and all incidents were investigated including near misses, however small, to establish causes and learn from any subsequent outcomes.

Members were informed that prompt action was also taken when things went wrong; that if equipment became defective or was damaged or broken, it was replaced; and that if, as a result of an investigation training was required, it was undertaken.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that:

Health and safety communications were sent out on a regular basis to help educate staff;

staff were encouraged to contact the Health and Safety team who would provide advice and assistance where necessary;

the Authority's supervisory and middle managers were all qualified with some form of health and safety qualification and awareness of health and safety legislation requirements was embedded throughout the organisation. Although the Authority's results were good, there was always room for improvement and the health and safety team would continue to investigate and analyse trends; and

as an addition, health and wellbeing was very much in the forefront of the Authority's mind at present and the health and safety team were working closely with human resources to look at ways to improve employee wellbeing which was particularly pertinent with an ageing workforce.

RESOLVED –

That Members note the performance of the Service in terms of Health, Safety and Welfare.

FA34

ROSPA HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS

The Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk advised Members that the RoSPA Health and Safety Audit took place in October 2015. This was an audit of complete health and safety systems throughout the fire service. The last audit had taken place in 2009 and the Authority had scored 65.7%, this year the Authority had scored 88.4% which was very commendable indeed.

The Health and Safety Manager informed Members that every five years as part of the CFOA South East Region, fire services were audited on their health and safety management systems and the practical implementations of those policies and procedures that were put in place; and that the Authority's previous audit had been in 2009 but because of industrial action last year it had been delayed until this year.

Members were informed that the audit looked at all the Authority's policies and procedures and how they were implemented; that the auditors visited fire stations, examined shift patterns and observed the training ground; and that they also met with department heads to look at how the policies and procedures were implemented.

Members received a brief presentation on highlights of the RoSPA Health and Safety Audit Report.

(Councillor Marland left the meeting)

FA35

INCIDENT NO. 25197: 22 NOVEMBER 2015, 10 OLD WATERY LANE, WOOBURN GREEN

The Authority received a presentation on the above incident from Station Commander Gerrards Cross and High Wycombe Fire Stations.

FA36

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority was to be held on Wednesday 10 February 2015 at 11.00am and determined that the venue would be at Milton Keynes Council Chamber, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3HS. The Chairman advised that transport would be provided from HQ for Members who required it.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.40PM