

Notes of Joint Consultative Panel

**11 April 2016
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Clinton (Chair)
Councillor Dehar (Vice Chair)
Councillors Afzal, Douglas-Maul, P Singh, Shackleton

Apologies:

Andrew Scattergood – Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
CFO Andy Hickmott, Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO)
Ade Robinson, Fire Officers' Association (FOA)

Employees Side:

Steve Price Hunt – Fire Brigades Unions (FBU)
John Routley – Unison

Officers:

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler (People Support Services)
Wendy Browning Sampson, People Support Manager

Observer:

N/A

4/16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5/16 Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 1 February 2016

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on the 9 November 2016 were approved as a correct record.

6/16 Dispute Resolution Report

Wendy Browning Sampson provided an overview of the Dispute Resolution Report, the purpose of which was to inform members of the Joint Consultative Panel (JCP) about the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute resolution

including Employment Tribunal activity which had occurred during the period of 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015.

A total of eight grievances had been received during the period, a slight increase on the previous reporting period. However, it was noted that such an increase was not necessarily negative and could reflect that employees are confident that such matters would be dealt with appropriately.

There had been four investigations during the period, although two of these had originated during the previous reporting period, reflecting that investigations can take time to be completed.

The Service continued to work closely with the Trade Unions including in its approach to case management. A toolkit for managers was being developed and this had been shared with the Trade Unions. People Support Services continued to report against local performance indicators (which commenced on 1 January 2015).

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- Business Partners are Human Resources professionals who work very closely with local managers, particularly on stations, supporting managers on a number of people management issues. A pro-active approach is taken to deal with issues earlier, rather than allowing issues to escalate. Business Partners can discuss a number of issues with managers including workforce profile, succession planning, wellbeing and attendance management, encouraging the adoption of preventative measures.
- The Business Partners are split into functional areas, with each team comprising one Business Partner and one Assistant Business Partner. It was agreed that Business Partner structure plus the structure of the wider organisation was to be circulated to Members when the new municipal year commenced.
- It is not compulsory for managers to attend the 'Effective Managers Series' training programme which is provided to refresh the development given to managers across the organisation on a range of management issues including discipline and grievance, capability and attendance management. It is only mandatory for managers to attend training / development for those cases where there is a legal / statutory obligation, otherwise training forms part of an individuals personal development plan, enabling personal accountability.

- A manager will need to have received training before conducting an investigation, or would conduct an investigation accompanied by an individual who has.
- The fact that a person conducting an investigation had not received the relevant training would not be considered a weakness in a tribunal.
- Videos were available of sessions of the 'Effective Managers Series', enabling individuals to undertake the learning without physically attending. It was agreed that Members may benefit from these videos in future.
- Concerns had been raised previously by members of the Trade Unions regarding the relatively high number of disciplinary cases and the length of time it took for cases to be concluded. These concerns had been raised with the JCP resulting in Members requesting that the Service and Trade Unions worked together to resolve these issues.

Resolved:

- 1) The Business Partner structure plus the structure of the wider organisation to be circulated to Members when the new municipal year commences.
- 2) Videos of sessions of the 'Effective Managers Series' training programme to be made available to Members.

7/16 Submission of a Trade Dispute relating to a 'Failure to Agree' and 'Failure to Consult' from Fire Brigades Union in relation to the Voluntary use of Additional Shifts

The item was not presented at JCP following mutual agreement between management and Trade Unions to remove the item from the agenda.

Sarah Warnes provided an update to Members; management and Trade Union representatives had met on 8 April and both parties had agreed to work together to provide a solution. As a result, it had been agreed that the report would not be presented at JCP and a joint statement would be issued during week commencing 11 April communicating the position to staff. If discussions proved to be unsuccessful, the report would be re-submitted to JCP.

Steve Price-Hunt advised that Trade Union representatives had engaged with a Principal Officer with a view to identifying solutions that were satisfactory for their members. In the event that management were to table a solution that was considered to be acceptable, this would be taken to the Union members for consideration.

(Meeting ended at 12.30 pm)

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