

Notes of Joint Consultative Panel

6 February 2017
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

- Present: Councillor Clinton (Chair)
Councillor Booth (Vice Chair)
Councillors Allcock, Bennett, Dad, Idrees and P. Singh
- Observer: Councillor David Barrie
- Apologies: Andrew Scattergood – Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
CFO Andy Hickmott, Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO)
Vic Mallabar – (UNISON)
Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler, People Support Manager
- Employees Side: Steve Price-Hunt – Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
John Routley (UNISON)
- Officers: Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Manager
Clare Glover, People Support Services

1/17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2/17 Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 19 September 2016

Attendance:

Angela Johnson was representing Unison and not FBU

9/16 Business Assistants should read Assistant Business Partners

10/16 The provider of the Employee Assistance Programme had now changed from OPTUM 24/7 to the BHSF (Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund).

The FBU representative did confirm that Fire Fighter Fitness testing was taking place and that the FBU were supportive of this however, it looked forward to including the approved

FireFighter Drill Assessment into the testing process as their preferred approach rather than the Chester Tread Mill Test.

In answer to a member's enquiry, it was confirmed that the firefighters fitness test had recently changed from every three years to once a year.

Firefighters are encouraged to use the Chester Treadmill test to manage and maintain their own fitness. If a firefighter fails their fitness test they are referred to Occupational Health where a specialist plan can be put in place.

The FBU representative stated that they support fitness testing and feel that the Fireground Fitness Test is the best and can be carried out at no cost to the Fire Service.

An update report was requested and it was agreed that a report would be scheduled for September 2017 and each subsequent year.

11/16 FBU should read Trade Unions

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 19 September 2016 were approved as a correct record with the above amendments.

3/17

Dispute Resolution Report

The Panel were informed of the proposed changes to be made to the format of the Dispute Resolution report. The new format will enhance the information provided and give more clarity. The report will continue to focus on the number, type and outcomes of disciplinary hearings, grievance hearings, capability outcomes, debriefs and other dispute resolution, including Employment Tribunal activity which has occurred during the reporting period and would be presented at the Joint Consultative Panel scheduled for September 2017.

It was proposed that at the Joint Consultative Panel scheduled for April 2017, two reports will be provided with the information for the reporting period July to December 2016. One report in the old format and one report in the new format. Members of the Panel will be asked to provide feedback on the new format and the format will be amended (if required) to ensure it captures all the information required by the Panel.

The FBU representative confirmed that the FBU have been working with People Support Services to ensure that the report is more user friendly.

The FBU representative stated that although numbers have fallen over the previous 5 to 6 years, there had been an unprecedented rise in the number and severity of discipline cases with six dismissals in the last six months. Following appeal, some of these cases were now going to Employment Tribunal.

The Unison representative welcomed the improvements to the report and felt the Service had a more adult and informal approach. On the non-uniformed side of the Service, there were less disciplinary cases but more grievances, but overall they were happy with the way these were being managed.

The Chair asked for the report to include more statistics on dismissals and grievances and it was agreed that this information would be provided to the April meeting of the Panel. An additional paragraph would be added about the dismissals. The Panel were informed that dismissals are not taken lightly and an appeals process was also in place. Debriefs are held with the Trade Unions involved in the case and the lessons learned are included in the Disputes Resolution Report.

It was explained that Disciplinary Action is action by the Employer against the employee, where a Grievance is made by an employee against the Employer.

A clear explanation of Dismissals/Grievances would be included in the Report, together with a breakdown of protected characteristics.

The Fire Brigades Union made a request for the Members to be involved in the Appeals stage of Gross Misconduct cases. It was felt that this would be open, transparent and fair and Members would provide impartiality and bring a wider skill set and a more balanced judgement than officers only sitting on an appeal.

The Chair stated that all Members of the Panel would benefit from further Employment Law training and it was agreed that this would be provided to Members in the new Municipal year.

Resolved that:

1. the change to the format of the data to the Dispute Resolution report be noted.
2. the Members of the JCP will provide feedback to the proposed approach to sharing information.

3. that the new approach to dispute resolution reporting commences from 1 January 2017 and subsequent future Dispute Resolution reports.

4/17

Presentation on the Effective Management Series of Training Videos

It was explained that a series of Management Videos had been produced with a Training Consultant.

The training videos are available on the Internet using the link www.fireecadamy.org.uk

Members watched the training video on Grievances and it was explained that officers had worked with the Representative Bodies. The information is still current and focuses on the behaviours and soft skills required when managing a grievance.

It was agreed that the link to the website would be circulated to members of the Panel.

Wendy Browning-Sampson would be available to answer any questions. Her contact details are:

Wendy.Browning-Sampson@wmfs.net

Tel No. 0121 380 6121

The FBU Representative asked if Any Other Business could be added to the agenda. It was confirmed that no other business must be raised at the meeting and any issues must be fed to the Wendy Browning-Sampson in the first instance.

(The meeting closed at 1315 hours)

Contact Officer: Julie Connor Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6906
