

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

12 October 2015 at 12.30pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice Chair);
Councillors Barrie, B Singh, P Singh (substitute for Hogarth), Skinner and Young

Apology: Councillor Barrie, Clinton (substitute for Ward), Hogarth, Ward

Observer: Not applicable

19/15

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2015, be approved as a correct record.

The Chair informed the members of the Committee that the report on the partnership review was not ready for the October meeting and would be completed in time for the Committee to consider at the November 2015 meeting. The Chair asked if there were any objections and all members of the Committee agreed that the report was to be presented at the November meeting.

With reference to the enquiry regarding the Arson Task Force raised by a member at the previous meeting held in August, the ACFO Gary Taylor confirmed that the Arson Task Force had been disbanded but the framework and work undertaken has continued and has been embedded in the mainstream work of the Fire Service and engagement continues.

A member advised the Committee that the collaborative model being piloted in the Coventry area was being finalised and

approved. Once published, the member would send this to the appropriate person within WMFS. The Committee agreed that the document is to be sent to Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, for consideration and further distribution as required.

20/15

Dispute Resolution

The Committee noted the Dispute Resolution report for the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015.

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People Support Services, informed the Committee that following discussions at the Joint Consultative Panel, work had been undertaken by People Support Services to reduce the number of disputes. There had been a positive impact upon the number of grievances, reducing the number of cases that reach that far.

The period January to June 2015, when compared to the same period in 2014, witnessed a reduction of:

- 17 investigations (from 21 to 4)
- 7 hearings (from 9 to 2)
- 10 grievances (from 13 to 3)

Wendy Browning Sampson, People Support Manager, provided an overview of the report. The members were informed that the information within the report relates to internal disputes and does not include information related to disputes regarding the Firefighters' Pension Scheme because these are dealt with at a national level.

The Chair asked if the information relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme would be made available and was informed that there was some uncertainty due to the information being collated by the Department of Communities and Local Government and could depend on the outcome.

A member asked for clarification on who heard appeals; was it councillors, independent persons, and/or senior managers of WMFS. The member was informed that senior managers of WMFS heard appeals, not councillors or independent persons. The practice of councillors and independent persons hearing appeals had been discontinued in 2004, and the use of senior managers of WMFS

was in line with the ACAS code of practice and the terms and conditions as laid out within the Grey Book and Green Book.

It was acknowledged that the next stage following an appeal would be industrial tribunal.

It was confirmed that any individual would receive HR advice from People Support Services throughout the process and the involvement of any representative body would be the decision of the individual. WMFS would not inform the representative body directly but would inform the individual of their right to ask for representation.

The Committee were informed that as part of lessons learnt, processes have been reviewed and streamlined with the aim to ensure assertive, safe and effective management. Changes had included the introduction of a formal debrief process, and greater collaborative working with managers, departments, and representative bodies. One outcome of the review had been to reduce the timescales involved, from the start of the process through to any eventual outcome, thus reducing the length of time any individual would be in such a position.

The 'Effective Manager Series' had been launched to increase the behaviours of managers, with a condensed training course being delivered to members of the Strategic Enabling Team (SET). Members requested if the training could be provided to them and it was confirmed that the condensed version, as delivered to SET, can be delivered by the legal training provider to members of the Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Consultative Panel.

It was confirmed that there was some interchange in terms of management of members of staff on the grey book and green book, although it was mainly green book staff report to grey book staff. In those cases where this is not the case, the operational element of a grey book member of staff's role would be managed by a uniformed member of staff, via the command groups.

21/15

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16

The Committee noted the work programme for 2015/16.

Members of the committee agreed that:

- The report 'Progress on the Partnerships Review' would be presented at the meeting in November.
- The subject of the scoping document for consideration would be data sharing, as this interlinks with partnerships.
- The following reports would be consolidated into one report;
 - Progress on Implementation of the Equality Objectives 2012-2015
 - Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act (2010)
 - Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Quarterly Update – Quarters 1 & 2 2015/16

Members of the committee agreed that the work programme would be amended to reflect the above changes.

A member enquired about the estates and property portfolio held by WMFS and its rationalisation. ACFO Gary Taylor confirmed that the WMFS property portfolio had been reviewed when the efficiencies programme commenced at the end of 2014 and the outcomes of the review were reported to the Fire Authority as part of the 2015-2016 Property Asset Management Plan. The committee requested an update on the report.

(Meeting ended at 13:10 pm)

Contact Officer: Stephen Timmington Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6680
