

## County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

At a meeting of the **Human Resources Committee** held at the CDDFRS Headquarters on **Thursday 16 September 2021 at 1000 hours.**

**Present:** Cllr L Mavin in the Chair  
**Durham County Council:** Cllr Carl Marshall, Cllr J Quinn and Cllr J Cairns  
**Darlington Borough Council:** Cllr H Crumbie  
**Officers:** S Natrass, K Metcalfe

### Part A

#### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Batey

#### 2 Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Mavin welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 3 Terms of Reference

The Committee considered Terms of Reference for the newly formed HR Committee as outlined in the Combined Fire Authority Constitution.

The Committee **noted** the report.

#### 4 Sickness Absence Performance Quarter 4: 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

K Metcalfe gave an update on the sickness absence performance for the period including how absence is calculated for the various shift rotas and how targets and performance indicators are set.

It was noted that sickness absence performance was previously reported to the Performance Committee therefore the reporting may appear out of sync on this occasion.

Covid related data will be monitored and included in future sickness absence reports unless a point is reached whereby it is no longer relevant.

Cllr Marshall highlighted that the report does not reference the changing roles of the Service throughout the pandemic and what effect it has had on sickness levels and morale of staff. Cllr Marshall noted that we want to recognise the excellent work of CDDFRS during the crisis.

K Metcalfe noted that all extra activities during the pandemic have been risk assessed and the effects on sickness were mitigated due to risk assessments in place. Staff have been provided with vaccines when volunteering at the vaccination sites.

S Natrass stated that the excellent work that staff had conducted throughout the pandemic would be included in a paper taken to the next Combined Fire Authority.

**ACTION:** Further context around extra activities carried out during the COVID pandemic to be added to the report.

The Committee **noted** the report.

## **5 Sickness Absence Performance Quarter 1: 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021**

K Metcalfe gave an update on the sickness absence performance for the period.

K Metcalfe noted that 16 employees have been on long term sickness, 9 of which have continued over the full period. A rise in mental health related sickness will be closely monitored and reported at the next meeting.

Cllr Mavin queried the sickness trigger process. K Metcalfe noted that an absence of more than 6 days or 3 separate absences triggers the sickness review process and the handling of separate absences within a short space of time can be afforded Manager's discretion.

Cllr Marshall commented that it will be interesting to see how the lifting of lockdown restrictions will affect COVID related absence figures within the next quarter.

The committee **noted** the report.

## **6 Culture Survey Results**

The Committee considered the findings of the third culture survey conducted by Durham University Business School in April 2021.

K Metcalfe noted that the response rate was lower than previous years which may be due to a change in format which has been online rather than paper based. The results have identified a number of areas to focus on. An action plan is to be produced and presented to the next HR Committee.

Cllr Marshall was encouraged by the positive results and thanked SLT for the work carried out which demonstrates great leadership of the Service.

Cllr Mavin requested an update on progress at a future meeting and thanked the Service for an excellent piece of work.

Cllr Cairns proposed that staff need a timeline for the process so they aware what the next steps are and the dates for this work. A timeline will help with continued engagement with the process and will encourage staff to participate in future surveys.

The Committee **noted** and **commented** on the report.

## **7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The Committee considered an update of the work carried out by the Service's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG)

S Natrass noted that the Code of Ethics will be presented to the Combined Fire Authority on the 17 September. Members will be asked to sign up to the expectations outlined in the document.

The Committee **noted** the report.

## **8 Health and Safety Performance Quarter 1: 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021**

The Committee considered a summary of the Service's health and safety performance for Quarter 1, 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021.

Three accidents to personnel have been reported during Quarter 1 which is in line with the Service target for the year 2021/22.

S Natrass noted that all incidents have been thoroughly investigated and required interventions have been put in place.

Cllr Quinn complimented the Service for its fantastic Training Centre and Breathing Apparatus decontamination facilities which is the first of its kind in the country. Cllr Quinn encouraged members of the committee to visit the facility.

Cllr Marshall highlighted the low level of incidents that have occurred within such a large Service and the types and numbers of incidents responded to throughout County Durham and Darlington.

Members **noted** content of the report.