

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

At a meeting of the **Human Resources Committee** held at the CDDFRS Headquarters on **Tuesday 22nd February 2022 at 1000 hours.**

Present: Cllr L Mavin in the Chair

Durham County Council: Cllrs A Batey, C Marshall, J Cairns and J Quinn

Darlington Borough Council:

Officers: S Nattrass, K Metcalfe

Part A

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr H Crumbie

2 Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Mavin welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

Cllr Quinn highlighted an incorrect spelling of his surname within Item 4. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 were agreed as a true record.

4 Sickness Absence Performance Quarter Three: 1 April – 31 December 2021

K Metcalfe provided members with an update on sickness absence performance for the period 1st April – 31 December 2021.

Cllr Batey asked if there had been or are any long COVID cases within the Service and if there is a process in place for those suffering with it. A discussion took place, KM explained that there had been a number of cases across the Service and coding on our sickness recording system would be revised to include long COVID sickness. Occupational Health (OH) processes were in place with consultation with GPs to support people with long COVID.

Cllr Batey raised concerns regarding the effect of long COVID on the health of frontline firefighters as the effects varied between individuals. Cllr Batey also queried what safeguarding is in place for RDS staff, SN confirmed that support mechanisms are in place to mirror those of WT including OH support, the requirement to maintain fitness levels and risk critical competencies.

Cllr Quinn queried if high sickness levels were due to an aging workforce. KM explained that general wear and tear to knees and hips is an issue. MSK reasons for absence are two-fold as sporting injuries can occur through trying to keep fit for the role.

Cllr Quinn asked if there is any resilience in place for Control during periods of high sickness. SN explained that cover is sought through the use of overtime, a pool of retired Control staff, Control managers, and officers who provide resilience in this instance.

Cllr Quinn queried if some firefighters cover both WT and RDS shifts. KM confirmed this and these staff would be counted as being off sick for both duty systems.

Cllr Marshall requested a presentation to Committee Members regarding the Service's approach to Living with Covid-19.

ACTION: KM to carry out a deep dive of MSK absence and provide an update within the year-end report.

ACTION: KM to present an update on our approach to Living with Covid-19 at the next Committee.

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

5 Health and Safety Performance Quarter Three 2021/22

S Natrass introduced the report which presented members with a summary of the Service's health and safety performance to the end of the third quarter 2021/22 reporting period.

Cllr Quinn queried if the firefighter who was injured at Peterlee Station was on a call. SN explained that the firefighter was not responding to a call and turned their ankle on the stair whilst coming down the stairs.

Cllr Marshall raised concerns regarding the TRVs following a vehicle accident that took place in Stanhope and asked about the wellbeing of the people involved and if a review of the use of TRVs would be carried out. SN explained that an investigation into the incident was underway. Two officers received minor injuries. The vehicle is being assessed and the extent of the damage is to be determined. Details of the incident will be included in a future health and safety report to the HR Committee.

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

6 Public Sector Equality Duty Report

SN introduced the Equality Duty Report for 2021. The report included:

- Background
- Strategic Objectives
- Values
- Processes
- Service USER Data
- Conclusions and Findings

The Committee **noted** the report.

7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan

SN introduced the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan created to support the work of the EDI Strategy.

The Action Plan comprises 5 areas of focus:

- Leadership, Partnership and Service Commitment
- Effective Service Delivery
- Community Knowledge and Engagement
- Employment, Health and Wellbeing
- Recruitment, Training and Selection

SN provided an update on progress of actions set out within each area.

Cllr Mavin acknowledged the high number of actions already complete. Cllr Batey noted that there is great enthusiasm within the EDI Group to move this forward.

8 Workforce Diversity Statistics

SN presented the Workforce Diversity Statistics compiled by the Home Office up until March 2021. SN highlighted that there had been some slight changes in the statistics since March 2021 but they were broadly reflective of our current position.

The Committee **noted** the report.