

**AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB CANOLBARTH A GORLLEWIN
CYMRU**



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**COFNODION Y PWYLLGOR PERSONÉL
MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

DYDD LLUN, 5 MAWRTH 2007

MONDAY, 5 MARCH 2007

***PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN,
HEOL LLWYN PISGWYDD, CAERFYRDDIN***

***FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
LIME GROVE AVENUE, CARMARTHEN***

11.00 – 12.05

PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: D R James

AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs.: C J Crowley, B J Hall,
K Harris,

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES K Becton, P James, F M Jones,
Mrs C Philpott, M Williams

1 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTERESTS

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer declared an interest in the additional agenda item 'Continuing Professional Development'. The Clerk and Director of Finance declared an interest in item 8 of the minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 11 December 2007 and the Director of Finance in the minutes of 5th February 2007.

2 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH DECEMBER 2006 AND 5TH FEBRUARY 2007

The minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 11th December 2006 and 5th February 2007 were received and approved as a true record.

3 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AND ILL HEALTH

Members considered the latest available sickness absence figures for the period April 2006 to January 2007 and figures profiling ill-health retirements for the same period. In regard to the sickness absence statistics, the overall average for the accounting period equated to an average figure of 6.79 shifts lost (compared to a figure of 7.96 shifts lost for the same period last year) with an overall projected figure for the end of the year being 8.15 shifts lost (against a figure of 9.55 shifts lost for 2006).

Whilst current performance had improved significantly over the figures for last year, it still remained outside the Service's target of 7 shifts lost as an overall average and managers had been asked to re-focus their efforts on the introduction of early interventions with the Occupational Health Service in cases where phased returns and restricted duties could assist with a quicker return to work.

Committee also noted that an evaluation of the Service's Occupational Health had taken place over the past few months under the auspices of Marsh UK, the Authority's Employment Risk Brokers from which they had concluded that the current Occupational Health Providers, Caerphilly Occupational Health Services Limited, provided an effective service for the organisation.

A recent meeting with the Welsh Audit Office on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government also found that all the appropriate policies and procedures associated with best practice in the field of attendance management were in place.

With regard to ill-health retirements, the overall numbers continued to be relatively low with the downward trend continuing year on year.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- i) Committee receive and note the current sickness absence statistics and ill-health retirement figures.*
- ii) Letters of thanks to be sent to all staff who had not taken any sickness leave during the past year.*

4 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON EUROPEAN FIRE TESTS – VIGO, SPAIN

The Head of Operational Risk Management had been invited to speak at a European Fire Test event in Vigo, Spain on 3rd April 2007.

He had been asked to give a presentation on the environmental impacts of firefighting chemicals and the excellent work that the Authority has done in this area over the last 5 years.

Members considered that the invitation reflected well on both the Authority and the individual and approved Area Manger Bates' attendance, along with an ORM colleague.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

the attendance of Area Manager Bates and one ORM colleague to speak at the European Fire Tests in Vigo, Spain on 3rd April 2007 be approved.

5 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT REVISED WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Authority's current Welsh Language Scheme had been approved in January 2000 and as part of last year's action plan it had been agreed to draw up a revised scheme to reflect the work that had been undertaken in this important area and to identify and timetable new challenges. The Welsh Language Board (WLB) has had sight of the revised scheme and initial comments have been incorporated. Committee were asked to consider the scheme prior to submission to the WLB for formal approval. Attached to the draft scheme was Appendix A which contained targets primarily for 2007-8, three of which however extended to the lifetime of the scheme itself.

The format followed that which was laid down in the statutory guidance and Members attention was drawn to the following areas in particular:

Section 1 : essentially sets the context from both a Service and equality perspective

Section 2: new sections include mainstreaming and partnerships

Section 3 : arrangements with other parties has been amended

Section 4 :operational activities had been amended to take into account the

enhanced role of the firefighters since the enactment of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the requirements therefore for Welsh speaking firefighters to be able to deliver community safety services in Welsh and creation of the Community Risk Reduction department

Section 6 : there remained a great deal of work to be undertaken in this area on assessing the linguistic requirements of posts.

Section 8: the WLB specifically requested that the final section on “Investigation under Section 17 of the Welsh Language Act “ be incorporated.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The revised draft scheme be approved

6 EMERGENCY WORKERS (OBSTRUCTION) ACT 2006

The Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Act 2006 came into force on 20th February 2006 and served to make it a specific offence to obstruct or hinder emergency workers who were responding to emergency circumstances. The maximum penalty for such an offence under this Act was a level 2 fine (currently £5000)

Members were aware that attacks on firefighters in the Authority were thankfully rare but welcomed the new laws which it was to be hoped would make a real difference by sending out a clear message that attacks that obstructed emergency workers were totally unacceptable

Home Office Circular 03/07 which provided more detail on the new legislation was attached for Members information, and it was noted that a press release relative to this matter had been issued.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The introduction of the Act be noted

7 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT

Details of two requests received from employees wishing to engage in Secondary Employment as outlined in Grey Book Conditions of Service were considered. The Corporate Head of Human Resources reported that the Secondary Employment Policy had been tightened in recent years, allowing staff to work only the middle two days of their rota period, so enabling them to have rest days either side of their work with the Service. The system was also being managed by Service managers who were actively checking whether staff undertaking secondary employment had a particular attendance pattern. Members were encouraged by the change in policy and to note that all

secondary employment was now being recorded.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The requests to undertake secondary employment be approved

8 TO RECEIVE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Health and Safety Management Performance Report to March 2007 was received and noted. A total of 117 On Duty Injuries had been incurred by Service Personnel for 2006 compared to 91 in 2005, equating to a 28% increase in this type of injury. Whilst no specific explanation could be given for this increase which in the main was non-generic and non-operational, it was noted that the number of actual duty days lost by Service employees due to On Duty Injuries in 2006 was 30% less than for the same period in 2005 which was a significant decrease. It was essential that any increase in On Duty injury occurrences especially for MAJOR injuries should be carefully analysed in order to identify root causes and trends.

On the 26th January 2007, a serious injury occurred to a Service employee from Newtown Fire Station whilst he was in attendance at a Road Traffic Collision involving a motor vehicle and a heavy goods lorry.

The employee had placed his left hand onto the blades of the hydraulic spreading equipment which were closing at the time, in doing so, the blades trapped and severed the Service employees' left thumb. Immediate first-aid was provided at the scene by attending medical personnel and the employee was transferred to hospital. This accident has been thoroughly investigated by the Health & Safety Department and has involved dialogue with the Health & Safety Executive due to the severity of injury.

A draft summary of findings has been produced which will be finalised and submitted to the Director of Service Policy & Performance shortly. Every effort has been made by the Service to provide the necessary welfare support to the injured person as well as Service colleagues who were in attendance at the Incident. An update on the investigation including any identified recommendations will be made available to Members at the next meeting.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted

**9 RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS AND THE PART TIME WORKERS
(PREVENTION OF LESS FAVOURABLE TREATMENT) REGULATIONS:
EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL 2007**

Members noted that a recent circular from the National Employers, Circular EMP/2/07 indicated that the Employment Tribunal to determine whether or not Wholetime and Retained Duty System firefighters were engaged to carry out the same or broadly similar work would take place on the 7-9 March 2007. Although a decision could take some time to filter down to local fire services, Committee were asked to note that all fire authorities had already agreed to a cost sharing arrangement to cover the legal fees associated with this case. Whilst the precise costs were unknown at present, the financial implications would not be insignificant and Members would be informed of the totals concerned as soon as they were available.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The content of Circular EMP/2/07 received from the National Employers on the 26 February 2007 be noted.