

**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, 3 MEDI 2007  
MONDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2007**

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

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

**11.00 – 12.00**

**PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE**

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: D R James

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

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES K Becton, P James, F M Jones,  
M Williams, R Lewis

**1 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTERESTS**

None were declared

**2 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair expressed his extreme disappointment that so many members had tendered their apologies for the meeting.

**3 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2007**

The minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 18<sup>TH</sup> June 2007 were received and approved as a true record.

**4 TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING**

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting it had been agreed that four Members be nominated to attend the Networking Women in the Fire Service Conference. However, only two Members had indicated their availability to attend, and both were subsequently unable to go at the last minute, leaving the Authority liable to pay for the cost of the Conference as the cancellations were made outside the cancellation cut off date.

The Clerk reported that similar problems had arisen in the current year of Members been unable to attend conferences at the last minute which had cost the Authority in unrecoverable conference and accommodation fees. Members expressed concern that commitments were not being fulfilled and at the subsequent cost to the Authority and suggested that the Group Leaders meet with the Clerk to discuss the matter further.

**RESOLUTION**

***It was RESOLVED that the Group Leaders meet with the Clerk to discuss the matter further***

**5 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2007 AND TO CONSIDER AN UPDATE ON THE CONTROL ROOM REVIEW**

Members were aware that at the Fire Authority meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June, it had been resolved that:

- i) The staffing structure contained within the Control Review report be approved.
- ii) Consultation on the staffing structure to take place with the relevant Minister at the Welsh Assembly Government
- iii) An ongoing review of the new staffing arrangements take place over the next twelve months with a report to each meeting of the Personnel Committee."

Members were also aware that the Joint Consultative Committee had sat twice

in recent months and on both occasions the Control Room Review had been on the agenda and a full discussion had taken place on the issues flowing from the report.

The Fire Brigades Union had formally asked for the matter to be referred to the National Joint Council Joint Secretaries, an option available within the Scheme of Conditions of Service. Both the Service and the Fire Brigades Union had now agreed to refer the matter in this way. The meeting was due to take place on Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September and would be attended by the Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the outcome reported to Members as soon as possible. Committee noted that the planned meeting with the Welsh Assembly Government Minister would take place on September 6<sup>th</sup>, when the Control Review was due to be discussed.

The Committee was informed that four new employees had been recruited and were due to commence their training in September. This would result in improved staffing resilience, and allow the Control Room Manager to properly cover anticipated maternity leave that would take place later in the year and other staff absence such as sickness and annual leave.

## **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

*The report be received and Members to be kept informed of developments.*

## **6 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AND ILL HEALTH**

Members considered the latest available sickness absence figures for the period April – July 2007 together with the statistics for ill-health retirements for the same period. Members were reminded that at the last meeting a request was made for sickness absence figures to be broken down into both long term and short term categories. Committee noted that short time absences currently amounted for 0.87 shifts lost, whilst long term absences i.e. over 28 days duration, accounted for 1.19 shifts lost, and based on current performance, the projected overall figure for 2007-8 would be 6.18 shifts lost which was within the Service's target of 6.5.

Both local managers and the Occupational Health providers had been requested to place greater emphasis on managing long term absences, particularly where managed / phased returns to the workplace could be facilitated. This had proved extremely beneficial where it had enabled employees to return to work undertaking Community Safety activities for example as an early means of re-engagement with the organisation, and would continue to be encouraged wherever possible. Turning to ill-health retirement figures, it was noted that these continued to be relatively low and represented performance within the upper quartile of best performing Fire and Rescue Services.

Mr Gethin Davies, Carmarthenshire County Commander attended the meeting to provide an overview of the management of sickness absence within his Command. He reported that although whole time sickness absence was managed well and that return to work interviews were carried out immediately on return to work, this was more difficult to manage in relation to retained staff. The Director of Human Resources indicated that all retained staff had full access to Occupational Health Services and were provided with full support and assistance.

Members offered their congratulations to managers for the robust way in which sickness absence continued to be managed and asked that a letter of appreciation be sent to Departmental Heads and County Commanders on their behalf.

## **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

- i) Committee receive and note the current sickness absence statistics and ill-health retirement figures.*
- ii) Letters of appreciation be sent to County Commanders and Heads of Departments commending them on their robust management of sickness absence*

## **7 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON PLANNING FOR MAJOR STAFF ABSENCE**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004), and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA 2004) placed duties on Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to plan for and respond to emergencies, and to maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as was reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurred it was able to continue to perform its functions.

FRAs were, therefore, expected to play an increasing role in contingency provision, including the supply of all appliances and equipment required and the effective deployment of available personnel at all times, even those when a large number of staff may be absent through illness or industrial action.

The Service was currently planning for major staff absence, whether it be industrial action or any other mass absence such as an influenza pandemic and Members noted the progress made in this planning work.

## **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

*The report on Major Staff Absence be noted*

## **8 TO CONSIDER A REPORT ON THE VEHICLE ARSON REDUCTION INITIATIVE MANAGER**

It was reported that funding for the post of Vehicle Arson Reduction Initiative Manager from the Welsh Assembly would cease on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007. As the work currently undertaken by this post had proved so successful since 2000, it was proposed for the work to continue as part of the Arson Reduction Team, which would then mirror the arrangements in North and South Wales. It was recommended that the current Vehicle Arson Reduction Manager continue to work in the Community Risk Reduction HQ department until such time as a suitable vacancy at the same managerial level occurred within the Service.

### **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

***The current Vehicle Arson Reduction Manager continue to work in the Community Risk Reduction HQ department until such time as a suitable vacancy at the same managerial level occurred within the Service.***

## **9 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT**

Details of a number of requests received from employees wishing to engage in Secondary Employment as outlined in the Grey Book Conditions of Service were considered. It was noted that all requests received by the Personnel Committee had previously been assessed by the County Commanders and had been forwarded with their approval.

### **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

- i) The requests for secondary employment be approved***
- ii) To write to all managers/staff eligible to undertake secondary employment reminding them of the Authority's Policy***

## **10 TO RECEIVE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Health and Safety Management Performance Report to September 2007 was received and noted. Members noted that the total number of On Duty Injuries recorded within 2007 to date was 58 which reflected a 30% reduction in reported injuries within the workplace against the same period in 2006. The majority of injuries had occurred as the result of slips, trips and falls, none of which had been caused by any inadequate systems of work or unsafe work equipment.

Members were reminded that the Service had been reviewing its Drug and Alcohol Policy during the year in order to ensure that it accurately reflected best practice in workplace safety standards. The most fundamental change to the

Policy content was the implementation of a Drug and Alcohol testing capability that would be undertaken by a specialist external and independent testing company.

After a significant amount of discussion and collaboration with representative bodies the 'testing for drug and alcohol' aspect of the Policy would be triggered by two distinct means, termed as '*For Cause*' and '*Post Accident*'.

The term '*For Cause*' referred to a situation where specific information became available to the Service on an individual employee's behaviour or performance while On Duty that was perceived to be caused by the possible effects of Alcohol or Drug use whether taken inside or outside the workplace.

The manner in which any information on an Employees' behaviour would be reported within the Service would be done in accordance with the Policy's strict requirements. The Service was keen to highlight within the Policy that effective Line Manager intervention in conjunction with the use of the Service's Occupational Health provider would assist in addressing any issues at an early stage before they presented a significant risk to the Service. However, circumstances could dictate that a Drug and Alcohol test should be carried out immediately to avoid compromising health, safety and welfare standards.

The term '*Post Accident*' referred to the possible implementation of a Drug and Alcohol test following a workplace On Duty Injury or Vehicle Accident. For the latter, such a test would be predominantly aimed at employees involved in Service vehicle accidents where the Police were not in attendance.

All Line Managers would shortly receive training on the implementation of the Policy which was scheduled to take place during September in readiness for the proposed 'go live' date of the Policy on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007. In addition, each Service employee would receive an information leaflet entitled Substance Misuse to assist them to understand the scope of the new Policy, copies of which were circulated for Members' information.

## **RESOLUTION**

*It was RESOLVED that*

*The report be received and approved*

## **11 REMUNERATION PANEL**

The Clerk reported that the Remuneration Panel would be meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September and that the membership consisted of the Chair of the Authority, the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the two Group Leaders. As on this occasion, the positions of Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Labour Group Leader were both held by Councillor Ray James, it was suggested that the Vice Chair of the Authority be nominated to become the fourth Member of the Panel

## **RESOLUTION**

***It was RESOLVED that***

***The Vice Chair to be appointed as the fourth Member of the Remuneration Panel***