

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



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**COFNODION Y PWYLLGOR DATBLYGU POBL A'R
GYFUNDREFN**

**MINUTES OF THE PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

DYDD LLUN, 9 MAWRTH 2009

MONDAY, 9 MARCH 2009

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

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

11.00 – 12.30

PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CADEIRYDD/CHAIRMAN: C Philpott
IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: M Williams

AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs.: R Llewellyn, P Llewellyn,
A Jopling, G Phillips, T Devichand, J
Holmes

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES: P James

YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE: R Smith, P Coleman, E Aitken,
A Howells, S McLinden, J Maunder

1. PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair reported the recent passing of past Member Ray James following a period of ill health. Mr James had been a very loyal and active Member of the Fire Authority particularly so in his role as Chair of the Personnel Committee and would be sadly missed by his ex colleagues and officers of the Service. Members stood as a sign of respect.

2. DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTERESTS

None were declared

3. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2009

The minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 20 October 2008 were received and approved as a true record.

4. TO RECEIVE THE CHAPLAIN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008

The Reverend Iltyd Prothero, Chaplain for Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion County Commands, presented the Annual Chaplain's Report for 2008 and noted that a very successful Annual Training day had been held in Pembrokeshire County Command on the 6th February 2009.

Reverend Prothero reported that 2008 had been a busy year for the Service Chaplains, and highlighted the significant and varied work undertaken on a voluntary basis by each of the Chaplains.

Members thanked the Chaplains for their continued and valuable support of the Service.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The Chaplain's Report be received and noted

5. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON HEALTH AND WELL BEING

At the last Committee meeting in December 2009, Members had been presented with figures relating to sickness absence trends for the period April to November 2008 which had indicated a sharp rise in absence rates which were primarily connected with the mini-influenza epidemic across the area at that time.

Details of sickness absence statistics for the period April 2008 to January 2009 were considered which indicated that current performance equated to an average of 5.38 shifts lost across the Service. The end of year projection

equated to 6.46 shifts lost which was outside the Organisation's target figure of 5.8 and was mainly attributable to both the mini influenza epidemic coupled with the Norovirus epidemic which also affected many employees during November and December 2008.

It was noted that although statistics for February and March 2009 were not yet available, information received from both County Commands and Departments indicated that performance levels would improve slightly prior to the end of March 2009.

As part of the Service's wider commitment to Health & Well-being, a new intranet site had been developed providing employees with a variety of useful information designed to improve the general health and fitness of colleagues. Areas covered ranged from nutrition to exercise and links to support groups such as the British Heart Foundation. Members also noted that the Cycle to Work Scheme introduced at the end of 2008 had proved to be extremely successful with employees from all areas of the Service purchasing cycles for home to work and leisure journeys. At present, approximately 70 employees had purchased cycles via the Cycle to Work Scheme.

County Commander Steve McLinden from Neath Port Talbot Command attended the meeting to provide an overview of how sickness absence was managed within his Command and Members appreciated the pro active approach taken and the efforts made to keep levels as low as possible.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted

6. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT 2009

Members were provided with an update on the Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment Campaign, which commenced on 12 January 2009.

The closing date for the receipt of completed applications had been 28 January 2009, and the Service had received 1893 completed application forms. Stage one sifting took place during the week 9 – 13 February 2009, which resulted in 348 applicants progressing to the Written Assessments. It was noted that in view of their status as current employees, Retained Duty System Firefighters who successfully completed the application process would now progress directly to the PQA based Interview as per the National Firefighter Tests Guidance. It had also been agreed that individuals who successfully completed the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service recruitment process in the Autumn of 2008, would be given an exemption from the psychometric assessments, and progress directly to the physical tests. The time table for the remainder of the process was:

02 - 5 March 2009 – Psychometric tests
23 March – 27 March 2009 – Physical Tests
06 - 16 April 2009 – Structured Interviews
27 April – 15 May 2009 – Pre-employment screening
June 2009 – Recruits available to commence basic training

Based on current vacancies, the Service would be looking to employ up to 40 recruits, the first 15 of whom were expected to be available to commence duties on station during September 2009. Members commended the process as being robust and fair and looked forward to receiving further updates in due course.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED

The report be received and noted

7. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE SAFER VALLEYS PROJECT

Members were advised that phase one recruitment activities for the proposed new station in the Upper Amman Valley had commenced in July 2008, with a target of securing a number of potential recruits in early 2009, who would be employed on conditional contracts during a two year development programme.

There were currently 12 individuals who had successfully completed the recruitment process and were now available for conditional employment, which would enable the commencement of a structured training programme in readiness of station occupancy.

It was proposed that the period between employment and attendance on the Initial Firefighter Course be used to deliver an integration and teambuilding programme by Officers from Neath Port Talbot Command and People and Organisational Development department, and would be delivered during the allocated drill night in the lead up to commencing training.

Discussions with the Safer Valleys Project Manager in relation to securing the site resulted in a Head of Terms Agreement being drafted, identifying the main terms and conditions for the grant of a long term lease for the proposed site.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Members note the progress made to date, and endorse the employment of the individuals who have successfully completed the recruitment process.

8. TO CONSIDER A REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE (WTD)

Members received a paper for information on the European Working Time Directive (WTD) reporting that the European Parliament had recently voted in favour of ending all opt-outs to the WTD within 36 months. Should this be introduced, the potential implications for the Fire and Rescue Service were significant, especially in terms of Retained Duty System and Flexible Duty System personnel and Members would be kept informed of any developments

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted

9. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE 2009/10 ANNUAL RISK CRITICAL TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

Following Committee's visit to the Service's Operational Learning & Core Skills Department Training facilities at Earlswood & Morrision last November, Members noted that the Service had reviewed the way in which it programmed and planned training and assessments for operational personnel. This had resulted in a new list of operationally themed skills & competencies being developed to underpin the 2009/10 Annual Risk Critical Training & Assessment Programme which commenced on 1st April 2009.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The publication of the Annual Risk Critical Training Programme be received and noted

10. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON WORKING TIME: ANNUAL LEAVE

The European Court of Justice had recently handed down its opinion on a case relating to holiday pay for workers on long-term sick, and held that a worker who was on sick leave for the whole of the annual leave year was entitled to a period of four weeks' (current statutory limit) paid annual leave, despite the fact they were actually not at work. It was noted that the national courts could decide whether the paid leave could be taken during the year, or whether it should be carried over into another leave year, but either way the employee was entitled to be paid at some point.

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted

11. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE ALL WALES PROCUREMENT PROJECT – LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Members were informed that a Project Team had been involved in the procurement of an all-Wales Tender process for Learning & Development programmes over recent months and were asked to note progress so far. The Service had been used as a pilot and their work should be commended as leading the way in this collaborative venture.

Members were pleased to note that the project team had written an article for the Fire magazine which was due to be published in the March edition.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Progress be noted on the All-Wales Learning & Development Tender and the Team be commended on their excellent work to date.

12. TO RECEIVE THE CORPORATE RISK DEPARTMENT REPORT – HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to the Corporate Risk Department Report from which it was noted that the number of On Duty injuries to Service employees since 1st April 2008 had shown an increase of 14% to the end of February 2009 compared with the same reporting period last year. This would be closely monitored and the findings reported on at the next meeting.

The Institute of Safety and Health had recently published a document for Elected Members titled 'Think about health and safety – *What elected members of local authorities need to know.*'

The Head of Corporate Risk had reviewed the publication and believed that it provided a valuable insight into Members role with regards to their health and safety duties and responsibilities as elected members. A copy of the publication was available on the Corporate Risk Department BIS page and hard copies could be obtained upon request. Alternatively, the Head of Corporate Risk was happy to meet with any Members to discuss the document contents and its implications upon the Member role within the Service.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

13. ***To resolve that the reports relating to the following items are not for publication as they contain exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.***

Following the application of the Public Interest Test, Committee resolved pursuant to the Act to consider these items in private, whereby the public would be excluded from the meeting during such consideration.

The Public Interest Test in this matter was:

“The reports relate to the possible early retirement of employees and consequential departmental restructuring. To make this information public would disclose personal data relating to individuals in contravention of the principles of the Data Protection Act. The public interest in disclosure was therefore outweighed by the public interest in maintaining confidentiality.”

It was RESOLVED that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

14. **TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE RE-ALIGNMENT OF PROCUREMENT, PURCHASING, DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLY DEPARTMENT**

Members gave consideration to a review of the Procurement, Purchasing, Distribution and Supply function, realigning resources within existing budgets. The purpose of the review was to recognise the increasing pressures on the procurement function in supporting organisational objectives, to address the audit reports on procurement compliance as far as possible within the resources available, and to better support front line officers.

A request had also been received for early retirement under the Local Government Pension Scheme '85 year rule' which if supported would allow maximum benefits to be secured from the re-alignment.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Members endorse a re-alignment of roles and responsibilities within the Resources and Procurement Directorate and approve the application of the Authority's discretions in terms of its Early Voluntary Retirement Policies, and the resultant support staff structure.

15. TO RECEIVE A REPORT OF THE SERVICE'S SUPPORT STRUCTURE

As part of the on-going review of the re-alignment of the Service's Support Structure, a request had been received from an individual seeking to retire under the provision of the Local Government Pension Scheme's '85 year rule' which, if supported, would enable a further restructuring of Administrative Services and following an initial outlay of £16,712 it was envisaged that a full review would realise year on year efficiencies of £7,000 per annum.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The application of the Authority's discretionary powers in terms of its Early Voluntary Retirement Policies be endorsed and the request to retire under the provisions of the '85 year rule' be approved