



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

**MEETING: EMPLOYEE PARTNERSHIP FORUM:  
THURSDAY 15 JANUARY 2015  
PERTH FIRE STATION**

**PRESENT**

John McFadden (*Chair/Fire Brigades Union*); Dave Boyle (*Director/West Service Delivery*); Denise Christie (*Fire Brigades Union*); Gerry Crawley (*UNISON*); Kirsty Darwent (*Board Member*); Lindsay Docherty (*POD Manager/Employee Relations-Policy Development*); Marieke Dwarshuis (*Board Member*); Peter Heath (*Head of HR*); Robin Iffla (*Board Member*); David Goodhew (*Director/Response & Resilience*); David McGown (*DACO Prevention & Protection*); Fiona McOmish (*People & Organisational Development*); Bill McQueen (*Board Member*); Peter Murray (*Director/Service Transformation*); Diane Vincent (*Director/People & Organisational Development – part-meeting*); Pat Watters (*Chair/SFRS Board*); Derek Jackson (*UNISON*); Gill Cochrane (*Notes*)

**1. WELCOME / OPENING REMARKS**

John McFadden welcomed:

- Gerry Crawley who had taken on the UNISON role from John Hackett;
- Denise Christie of the Fire Brigades Union to present one of the agenda items;
- Fiona McOmish, recently returned from maternity leave.

It was noted that, for the purposes of assisting with the production of a draft set of minutes only, the proceedings were being recorded.

It was agreed that discussion would move to Agenda Item 7 to be presented by the FBU on the subject of Gender Based Issues.

**2. APOLOGIES**

- Alasdair Hay, Chief Officer
- Michael Davidson, Fire Officers Association
- Debbie Hutchings, UNITE
- Sarah O'Donnell, Director/Finance & Contractual Services
- Robert Scott, Director/North Service Delivery

**3. DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 20 NOVEMBER 2014**

Approved as an accurate record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

(i) *Item 14.(i): Finance & Contractual Services: Strategic Intent*

With reference to the action point, Derek Jackson advised that he had not yet received a copy of the Strategic Intent presentation.

**5. UPDATE: CHAIR OF SFRS BOARD**

Pat Watters advised that:

- Information in regard to the SFRS Board meeting in November was available on the service's website;
- The following new Scottish Government appointments were noted: Michael Mathieson to Cabinet Secretary; Paul Wheelhouse to Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs; he will meet the Representative Bodies, and is keen to work with management and Trade Unions;
- The Pay and Reward project had entered the negotiating stage.

With reference to the recent tragic road traffic incident in Glasgow involving a Refuse Lorry, Pat highlighted that the same fire crew had attended the Clutha Bar accident only a year before. He expressed thanks and appreciation for local Chaplains who had assisted staff and members of the public affected. It was noted that counselling services were made available immediately for staff who had attended.

**6. CHIEF OFFICER'S UPDATE**

In the absence of the Chief Officer, who was attending an NJC meeting in London, Alex Clark updated members as follows:

- Following the outcome of the Cultural Audit, an Action Plan would be developed by Training Equality and Development;
- The next stage of the Pay and Reward process commences next week;
- The VS/ER process was continuing, with figures still awaited from one remaining pension provider.

**7. FBU: GENDER-BASED ISSUES**

Denise Christie advised that the purpose of her report was to highlight the FBU's concerns in relation to difficulties experienced by some SFRS women members, and to raise awareness of the types of issues that were being raised with the FBU. She also highlighted the FBU's willingness to work with SFRS to improve the position. She outlined a number of recommendations, the background to the concerns, and the FBU's understanding of the leadership required by managers to alleviate difficulties. She referred to meetings she had attended with the Equalities & Diversity Manager and the Head of HR when it was agreed she would bring forward a report to this forum.

Diane Vincent commented that:

- The SLT had discussed the report, and welcomed the raising of any issues causing difficulties for staff;
- Work is ongoing to tackle such issues and, on behalf of the Chief Officer and SLT, she advised that SFRS has a 'zero tolerance' approach towards any discriminatory behaviour;
- There is already a database recording both grievances and discipline cases including their source; these are monitored and statistics reported to this forum, as well as to the Staffing Group, and the SLT through performance reporting;
- At this stage, there are few live grievances of the nature outlined in the report, and staff should use the policies and procedures in place to help them;
- With regard to 'prioritisation of investment' – the database described is part of the solution; a Positive Action Survey had been undertaken and audit information

analysed; work was ongoing, led by Denise Rooney and Lorna Harrison, to identify specific areas requiring intervention;

- On Friday 9 January 2015, the SLT had debated the outcomes of the Cultural Audit; it was agreed that employment policies require to be fair and transparent and recognise gender-specific issues; work was ongoing to harmonise these;
- Poor management requires to be targeted but equalities training should not be used as a punishment;
- Other actions being taken by SFRS include the development of the Dignity and Integrity at Work Policy. This policy is expected to go to the SFRS Board for approval in March 2015 and will be accompanied by an Employee Handbook. Both documents should be issued by May 2015.
- The recommendations contained within the report are currently in process and SFRS would work with Trade Unions to identify problem areas, and how to improve management development.

Kirsty Darwent and Pat Watters welcomed the report, commenting that it reflected issues arising from the Cultural Audit. The SFRS Board recognised the issues and shared concerns with SLT. Cultural focus groups would assist in changing the organisational culture, and the Trade Unions should be involved in that work to strengthen and achieve joint recommendations.

Robin Iffla highlighted the need to ensure that SFRS personnel were aware that some behaviours were not acceptable and, in partnership with the Trade Unions, confidence issues must be addressed in order that staff are more comfortable about raising issues with managers.

Bill McQueen sought clarification in regard to SFRS plans over the next 2-3 years to refresh equalities training in order that managers have an up-to-date appreciation of how to address issues. Whilst she acknowledged the importance of such training, Diane Vincent highlighted that antecedent Services had invested a great deal of money in equality and diversity training prior to the implementation of SFRS. However, it would be helpful to consider refresher training, and to remind staff of the Code of Conduct as well as relevant policies and procedures. It would be helpful to work together to understand patterns, and target support and appropriate action.

**It was agreed that this would be picked up through the Cultural Audit and Positive Action Team in liaison with the Representative Bodies. ACTION:  
DIANE VINCENT**

## **8. WORKING TOGETHER FRAMEWORK**

### **(i) Update: Partnership Advisory Group: 10 December 2014**

It was noted that the meeting scheduled to take place on 10 December had been cancelled, and that next one would take place on 4 February.

### **(ii) Working Together Action Plan / Facilities and Recognition Agreement**

Lindsay Docherty presented the principles of the proposed Time off for Trade Union Duties Policy, commenting that the establishment of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service provided an opportunity to create a new model of employee relations founded on mutual trust, respect and partnership. In order to facilitate the principles within the Working Together Framework, SFRS wished to make appropriate provision for employees who are recognised TU officials to be permitted reasonable time off during working hours to carry out certain trade union duties, activities and

training. She outlined the policy details, comparison with other organisations, as well as the financial and employee implications.

It was noted that the next step would be to issue the draft proposed key principles for consultation.

Denise Christie suggested that consideration be given to allocating a proportion of the time to Equality reps, and Lindsay Docherty noted this.

## **9. POD UPDATE: PEOPLE INFORMATION AND REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

### **(i) Discipline and Grievance Stats (Q3: September to December)**

Lindsay Docherty circulated information relating to disciplinary and grievance statistics and, as requested at the last meeting, this now included analysis of the subject matter of discipline and grievance cases, both ongoing and concluded. She highlighted that Criminal cases were regularly reviewed in order to identify the best approach, and from April, a rolling graph would be provided by subject matter, with a quarterly breakdown to identify those progressed and concluded across the year.

During discussion, it was noted that:

- Parameters of guidance for the handbook and policy would be reviewed in regard to whether or not there was a reasonable way for individuals to continue at work pending disciplinary/criminal proceedings;
- The level of grievances across the organisation was relatively low;

**It was agreed that:**

- **Information on cases which were concluded within policy timescales would be helpful; and where they were not, whether this was by agreement;**
- **Information also to be included in regard to whether the grievance was upheld or not.**

### **ACTION: LINDSAY DOCHERTY**

### **(ii) Wider POD Stats**

Peter Heath advised that these would be brought forward to a future meeting.

## **10. POD: GENERAL OVERVIEW / UPDATE ON KEY PROJECTS**

Peter Heath updated members as follows:

- **VSER:** Control was still under consideration at the same time as others; a case was put forward to the Scottish Government to extend the scheme beyond March and this was being considered; dates of VSER meetings would be shared with Trade Unions, and a general update for the wider service would be published.

### **ACTION: MARION NICHOLSON**

- **Pay and Reward:** the collective bargaining process was about to commence, with nothing significant to report at this state;
- **Cultural Audit:** focus groups had now been completed (x48) involving 500 employees in various roles; work would help to inform a Cultural Action Plan for consideration of SLT and Board;
- **New Values Framework:** an Action Plan was being developed;
- **Audit Action Plan:** collective key action points to SLT/Board late February;
- **Positive Action Review:** Lorna Harrison preparing a report for Board engagement day; findings to be submitted to SLT and incorporated into Action Plan; priority

actions include protected characteristics; a report would come forward to the Staffing Group in due course.

**It was agreed that the Positive Action Plan would be shared with Representative Bodies once it had been signed off. ACTION: LINDSAY DOCHERTY**

**11. FINANCE AND CONTRACTUAL SERVICES**

Nothing to report. Standing Item.

**12. AOCB**

None.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Thursday 19 March 2015 @ 10:30am – Ground floor meeting room, Perth fire station – VC facilities available.**

**THEREAFTER**

30 April	17 September
11 June	5 November
6 August	17 December