

## County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Minutes of a meeting of the **Human Resources Committee** held at Fire HQ on **Tuesday 16 May 2023** at **1000 hours**.

**Present:** Cllr J Cairns in the Chair

**Durham County Council:** C Marshall, A Batey

**Darlington Borough Council:** -

**Officers:** K Metcalfe  
S Palmer-Donohue

### Part A

#### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs L Mavin, J Quinn and C McEwan.

It was agreed that Cllr J Cairns would chair the meeting in Cllr L Mavin's absence.

It was noted that the meeting would not be quorate but as there were no decisions to be made it would go ahead.

#### 2 Minutes of previous meeting – 2 December 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### 3 Sickness Absence Performance Report Quarter Four 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

K Metcalfe introduced the report which provided an update on sickness performance for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Discussion took place regarding the comparison between the current position and pre covid.

Cllr A Batey commented on a possible correlation between people working longer and ill health. It was agreed that K Metcalfe would break down the data by age and present at the next meeting.

**ACTION:** K Metcalfe to review sickness data and identify age trends for the next meeting on Tuesday 5 September 2023.

Cllr C Marshall noted the importance of understanding the detail of each individual case to help people back into their role and queried whether Services reporting lower sickness figures were able to share best practice. K Metcalfe confirmed that some

Services used a modified duties process which is something CDDFRS have used in the past and did not help with cases of long term sickness.

The Committee **noted** the report.

#### **4 Health and Safety Report 2022/23**

S Palmer-Donohue provided Members with a summary of the Service's health and safety performance for 2022/23.

Discussion took place around the connection between the hot summer period and the rise in vehicle accidents and increased call volume to fires in the open.

Cllr A Batey queried whether data would be better presented statistically with the number of call outs vs the number of incidents.

Members thanked S Palmer Donohue and the Health and Safety team for their work over the year.

The Committee **noted** the report.

#### **5 Private Medical Care**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which provided details of the potential benefits of utilizing private medical care or interventions to proactively reduce sickness absence.

Discussion took place around a potential reduction in waiting times for treatment which could result in a speedier return to full duties.

Cllr C Marshall queried the current occupational health function and whether the procurement of private medical care would be provided by occupational health or if it would be outsourced. K Metcalfe confirmed that occupational health can make referrals but would not carry out private medical care themselves. Private medical care would be arranged on a case by case basis in line with the Service framework.

The Committee **noted** the report.

#### **6 Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services Spotlight Report**

K Metcalfe introduced the report which informed the Committee of the outcomes of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Values and Culture Report and the internal review of CDDFRS practices against the recommendations made.

A gap analysis had been carried out and an action plan produced which would be monitored by the HR Committee moving forward.

Cllr C Marshall queried how frequently DBS checks were carried out. K Metcalfe confirmed that standard DBS checks were made at the point of entry for all staff, enhanced checks were carried out on CS staff every 3 years and further vetting

through Durham Constabulary was in place for senior officers. Employees are required to disclose any cautions or convictions received and they are dealt with through the Service disciplinary procedures.

Discussion took place around possible reputational damage outweighing the cost of further checks and vetting. Members queried whether more could be done and suggested that additional DBS checks were considered at the point of promotions. K Metcalfe confirmed that checks and vetting was included in the action plan and something that was being considered nationally.

The Committee **noted** the report.