



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

Working together for a safer Scotland

**PUBLIC MEETING – PEOPLE COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 6 JUNE 2024 @ 1345 HRS**

**BRAIDWOOD SUITE, SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,  
WESTBURN DRIVE, CAMBUSLANG, G72 7NA / VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)**

**PRESENT:**

Mhairi Wylie (Chair) (MW)  
Neil Mapes (NM)  
Fiona Thorburn (FT)

Steve Barron (Deputy Chair) (SB)  
Andrew Smith (AS)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Lyndsey Gaja (LG)	Interim Director of People
Bruce Farquharson (BF)	Deputy Assistant Chief Officer, Head of Training
Jim Holden (JH)	Head of Safety and Assurance
Kelly McDougall (KMCD)	People Advisor (Item 9.1 only)
Elaine Gerrard (EG)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Item 9.3)
Kirsty Darwent (KD)	Chair of SFRS Board
Kevin Murphy (KM)	Group Commander, Board Support Manager
Heather Greig (HG)	Board Support Executive Officer
Debbie Haddow (DJH)	Board Support/Minutes

**OBSERVERS**

John McKenzie, Fire Brigades Union  
Gus Sproul, Fire Brigades Union

**1 CHAIR'S WELCOME**

- 1.1 The Committee Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present and attending via MS Teams.
- 1.2 Those participating via MS Teams were reminded to raise their hands, in accordance with the remote meeting protocol, should they wish to ask a question. This meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes only.
- 1.3 On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked BF for his hard work and efforts throughout his career and in particular to this Committee, wishing him well for his imminent retirement.

**2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 2.1 Malcolm Payton, Board Member  
Andrew Watt, Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance  
Liz Barnes, Interim Deputy Chief Officer, Corporate Services  
David Farries, Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Operational Delivery  
Fiona Munro, Head of People  
Geri Thomson, Deputy Head of People  
Richard Whetton, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance

**3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE**

- 3.1 The Committee discussed and agreed that the *Key Case Update* verbal report would be heard in private session due to the small number of individuals involved and confidentiality in line with Standing Orders (Item 9D). The draft minutes/verbal update of the *Remuneration, Appointments and Nominations Sub Committee* would be taken in private due to the confidential nature of the issue (Item 9G).
- 3.2 No further items were identified.

**4 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

- 4.1 No conflicts of interest were declared.

**5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: THURSDAY 7 MARCH 2024**

- 5.1 The minutes were agreed as accurate record of the meeting.
- 5.2 **The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024 were approved as a true record of the meeting.**
- 5.2 Matters Arising**
- 5.2.1 No matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

**6 ACTION LOG**

- 6.1 The Committee considered the Action Log, noting the updates and agreed the closure of completed items.
- 6.2 **Members noted the updated Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**

**7 COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

- 7.1 MW presented the People Committee (PC) and Remuneration, Appointments and Nominations Sub-Committee (RANSC) Statement of Assurance 2023/24, outlining evidence of how the Committee supports the effective functioning of the Board for approval.
- 7.2 **The Committee approved the report.**

**8 PEOPLE: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING**

**8.1 People Performance Report Quarter 4 2023/24**

- 8.1.1 LG provided the People Performance Report Quarter 4 2023/24 to the Committee for scrutiny of the People KPIs from the Performance Management Framework and the further details within the People Performance Report. The following key areas were highlighted from the Executive Summary:
- Ongoing work of the On Call Strategic Co-ordinating Group to support attraction and retention.
  - Enhanced remuneration (retainer fee) and flexibility in availability bands for On Call personnel effective from January 2025.
  - Ongoing work on recruitment and development activities within Operations Control. Future spotlight scheduled for September 2024.
  - Update on the main reasons for health and wellbeing referrals.
  - Both 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and annual performance measures reported.
  - Error noted within the narrative for KPI46 (Rural Full Time) as this still related to Quarter 3.
- 8.1.2 In regard to KPI48 (staff turnover), the Committee were reminded that exit interviews were offered but the uptake was limited. LG noted the short and longer-term measures to improve this position. LG further noted that all exit interviews are reviewed to help identify any trends or if any necessary actions are required.

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- 8.1.3 In regard to KPI62 (female ratio – wholetime), LG confirmed that there was only a 3% increase in female wholetime staff since 2016. LG explained the reason was the closure of the application window due to the significant pool of applications already received. This increase was consistent across the sector, however the ambition was to make improvements in this area.
- 8.1.4 In regard to KPI63 (equalities data), LG advised that this data was captured at recruitment stage however, there were limitations on historically reviewing this data.
- 8.1.5 In regard to employee demographics, LG advised that this data was captured and was a key metric in terms of workforce planning projections. LG offered to discuss further off table with Committee members.
- 8.1.6 In regard to the wellbeing programme within OC, LG offered to discuss further off table with Committee members.
- 8.1.7 In regard to the Safecall confidential reporting line, LG advised that this had been in place for one month. An initial review and evaluation would be undertaken, and an update would be brought to the Committee in due course. Brief discussion took place on the projected levels of activity and benchmarking against other fire and rescue services.
- 8.1.8 The Committee queried the process which would be undertaken following a reported incident and sought assurance that any necessary action would be taken promptly. LG outlined the process that would be taken following any reported incident, including the different reporting methods available, experienced trained investigators handling calls, appropriate safeguards in place, escalation process, signposting to wellbeing support and advice etc.
- 8.1.9 The Committee commented on previous complaints relating to the length of time that grievances etc can take and sought assurance on prompt timescales for any investigations arising from the confidential reporting line. LG provided assurances on the timeliness of initial contact and investigations commencing. The overall timescale of the investigation would be dependent on the complexity of the individual cases, however the intention would be to resolve as promptly as possible.
- 8.1.10 LG noted that formal reporting on any complaints etc would be provided under the normal reporting process. The Committee requested an update on volume of calls to the Safecall confidential reporting line and analysis of themes be provided early in the next financial year. (Captured under Item 15.1)

### 8.1.11 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

*(KMcD joined the meeting at 1405 hrs)*

## **9 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, CULTURE AND FAIR WORK**

### **9.1 Colleague Experience Survey Update**

- 9.1.1 KMcD provided a verbal update in relation the Colleague Experience Survey and highlighted the following key points:
- Survey was live for 6 weeks from 31 March 2024 to 6 May 2024 with 1887 responses (27%) received. Breakdown of responses were Operational Delivery (80%), Corporate Services (15%) and unknown (5%). Other statistics on responders were noted as Wholetime (52%), over 16 years' service (50%), male (68%), female (22%).
  - To evidence the effectiveness of the communication strategy, the source of origin to complete the survey was reported as weekly brief (45%), iHub (18%), line managers (13%) and other categories (15%).
  - Continued support from and engagement with Rep Bodies.
  - Weekly meetings held with survey champions which helped support them, share informal feedback, and shape communication.

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- Outline of next steps relating to communication, reporting and analysing the survey results.

9.1.2 LG reminded the Committee that an update would be provided at the next Board Strategy Day (25 July 2024) and the final report would be submitted to the SFRS Board (August 2024).

9.1.3 In regard to the frequency of staff surveys, LG noted that the last service wide survey was undertaken in 2018 with the intention having been to undertake surveys every 2 years. However, due to the pandemic and the subsequent recovery period, this had not been achieved. LG further noted that more frequent and shorter focussed surveys had been considered. However, the recent full colleague experience survey would provide baseline data and would allow the Service to progress with shorter pulse surveys in the future if deemed appropriate.

9.1.4 KMcD informed the Committee of the longer-term communications plans for the survey and to help address some of the concerns, continuing to engage to build trust levels and collectively make improvements.

9.1.5 The Committee noted the low response rate and queried whether this was a sufficient baseline for the full workforce. KMcD reminded the Committee that the response target was 30% and that the potential reasons for the shortfall was noted. KMcD noted that there was still work to be done to improve engagement, communications and trust with the Service to encourage more responses in the future. KMcD further noted the intention for future collaborative work with Rep Bodies to understand the reasons for not completing the survey and to provide an opportunity for gathering additional information to build on the feedback.

9.1.6 In regard to the survey questions, LG outlined how the questions were set noting 2 key considerations. These were the ability to compare with the 2018 survey to demonstrate changes/improvements and maximising benchmarking opportunities with other justice sector organisations. KMcD noted that the Rep Bodies were in agreement with the questions.

9.1.7 LG confirmed that the action plan for communicating the results of the survey would include the format of 'you said, we did', and this would be delivered over a sustained period to maximise awareness.

9.1.8 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**

*(KMcD left the meeting at 1435 hrs)*

## 9.2 Culture Development Group Update

9.2.1 LG presented a report to the Committee to provide an update on the Culture Action Plan (CAP) and progress made by the Culture Development Group (CDG) and associated culture activities within the Service. The following key points were highlighted:

- Work undertaken to benchmark, planning activities around culture, convening of the CDG and workstreams.
- Key work to date included the colleague experience survey, confidential reporting line, various engagement sessions across the Service, first tranche of delivery of management development programme for supervisory managers, establishment of various employee networks and work to review recruitment and selection approach, and specifically tailored promotional processes.

9.2.2 In regard to the action plan, LG to review and update off table on any missing dates and RAG status.

9.2.3 The Committee commented on the work undertaken and still required, the need for momentum and timely delivery of change and noted that the first year had not achieved what had been intended.

- 9.2.4 LG offered her assurance that this area remained a key priority and focus for the Service. LG reminded the Committee of the work undertaken and progress made within the first year whilst acknowledging that further work was still required. LG noted the significance of the colleague experience survey which would provide a baseline to measure against going forward.
- 9.2.5 LG reminded the Committee of the work and engagement across the organisations relating to the critical role of managers on setting the tone and addressing situations where behaviours were unacceptable. LG noted that this process would take time to embed across the Service. LG further noted that feedback from supervisory management development days, which were being held off station, had been excellent and this would be brought to the Committee for scrutiny in due course. LG acknowledged that this process would take longer, however it was felt that this would be a more effective learning experience and would increase understanding within participants.
- 9.2.6 The Committee noted the work undertaken and requested that consideration be given to provide a fuller update on activities going forward. LG noted the comments and would consider for future updates.
- 9.2.7 Discussion took place on the potential for smaller or localised changes as opposed to Service wide. LG noted that the analysis from the colleague experience survey could provide opportunities for localised action plans and engagement. It was recognised that the role of managers, and the support they required, was significant to enable effective change within the Service. The Committee noted that this area of work required to be progressed at pace.
- 9.2.8 The Committee commented on improvements needed on the pace given to challenging and responding (consequences) to unacceptable behaviour.
- 9.2.9 The Committee commented on the need to support and develop managers appropriately for their role. LG reminded the Committee of the level of movement within the Service in the past few years and noted the capacity difficulties in maintaining the level of support required.
- 9.2.10 The Committee noted that further off table discussions would be helpful to understand the timeframes involved and what the realistic end position would be.
- 9.2.11 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

*(E Gerrard joined the meeting at 1455 hrs)*

### **9.3 Women's Employee Liaison Forum Case Study**

- 9.3.1 LG presented the report to provide an update on activities of the Women's Employee Liaison Forum (WELF) and highlighted the following key points:
- Alignment with other workstreams and programmes of work whilst avoiding duplication of activities.
  - Open and honest forum without being overly bureaucratic to allow discussions on issues affecting women in the workplace.
  - One example of some of the issues/gaps that had been highlighted and how this would be addressed in the workplace. It was noted that this forum allowed small changes to be made which would have a positive impact on individuals.
  - Beneficial and effective forum from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective and appreciated by the Rep Bodies.
- 9.3.2 The Committee queried whether there was any specific work in relation to menopause or carers in the workforce. EG noted that both these areas were being progressed through the People Directorate activities rather than specifically through WELF. EG provided a brief outline of the activities regarding both menopause and carers within the Service.

9.3.3 LG reiterated the benefits of this informal opportunity, involvement of Rep Bodies and the collegiate approach from all those involved.

9.3.4 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

*(E Gerrard left the meeting at 1500 hrs)*

## **10 TRAINING**

### **10.1 Training Function Update and Performance Report Quarter 4 2023/24**

10.1.1 BF presented the high-level overview of the Training function activity and performance over Quarter 4 2023/24 and highlighted the following key points:

- Top level KPIs contained within the report are underpinned by detailed performance indicators which allows detailed scrutiny, good practice and areas of improvement to be identified across the function.
- KPI22-24 (various modules) – Reminder that the completion of these modules was the responsibility of individual line managers.
- KPI22 (core skill modules) – Day Duty staff were included for the first time in Q1 2023/24 and attributed to the reported decline during that reporting period.
- KPI25 (incident command modules) – Small reduction (ICL1) in this reporting period due to difficulties in arranging courses in rural areas over the winter months.
- KPI26 (core skills) – brief explanation on how the target was set for this indicator. Improvements and efficiencies were noted in both ICAT and driving courses. Review and pilot of revised (combined) breathing apparatus courses underway and proposed next phase.
- KPI29 (training function course delivery) – Explanation provided on the reduction in this reporting period. Following a review, online evaluation form to be introduced.
- Draft Training Strategic Asset Management Plan would be presented at the next meeting (August 2024).

10.1.2 In regard to assessing impact on Workforce Pro for non-uniformed staff, BF advised that the introduction of this system would provide a single recording platform which would be monitored by line management and performance reported via the training function.

10.1.3 In regard to support and provision of additional learning needs/styles, BF advised that LCMS modules complied with accessibility standards and were supported through the accessible tools available. In relation to practical training, all instructors and crew commanders on stations are required to complete a methods of instruction module which include information on different learning styles, delivery methods etc.

10.1.4 In regard to simulation software (XVR), BF advised that this would be rolled out across the incident command training and noted that this was an improvement on the current provision. BF briefly noted other opportunities to increase the use of simulation training within the Service.

10.1.5 BF briefed the Committee on the various accreditation and standards required and achieved by the Service.

10.1.6 In regard to efficiencies within the training function, BF explained that this related to smarter and more efficient delivery and provision of courses/learning materials.

10.1.7 The Committee noted their thanks and best wishes for BF ahead of his upcoming retirement.

10.1.8 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

*(Meeting broke at 1520 hrs and reconvened at 1530 hrs)*

## 11 HEALTH AND SAFETY

### 11.1 Health and Safety Performance Report Quarter 4 2023/24

11.1.1 JH presented the Health and Safety Performance Report Quarter 4 2023/24 to provide an overview of progress against the Annual Health and Safety Improvement Plan 2023/24 and the Health and Safety KPIs. The following key areas were highlighted:

- Reduction in verbal attacks within this reporting period, however there was an increase in physical attacks. Recent engagement with Police Scotland regarding attacks on emergency workers, convening a working group and participating in a study to identify trends ie scale, type and locations.
- Reduction in RIDDOR reports against the same period last year with 2 incidents being reported.
- Increase in accident/injuries reported during the quarter. However, the number of incidents would reduce due to the further evidence now received/pending. One event involved 9 personnel and related to suspected asbestos exposure.
- Near miss reporting continues to improve.
- Overall decrease in vehicle accidents. Joint investigation ongoing in relation to the recent RTC involving an appliance in Wester Ross.
- Overall completion of Health and Safety Improvement Plans was 92% (78% for quarter 4).
- Key work activities during the quarter includes review of risk assessments and publication of Service Delivery Area Handbook (March 2024).
- Operational Assurance work has recognised trend in asbestos incidents and proactive control measures were now in place.
- Full debrief and report was scheduled on a Level 4 incident in Edinburgh.
- Good progress was being made in relation to supporting the review of Event Management processes.
- Good progress was being made in relation to review and completion of COSHH Assessments.

11.1.2 The Committee noted and welcomed the succinct report.

11.1.3 The Committee commented on the variations in the level of incidents in different reporting periods and queried whether the Service benchmarked against other fire and rescue services (FRS). JH advised that the Service does benchmark against other FRS, however there were difficulties in identifying a similar demographic and geographic footprint. JH further advised that the levels, for the size of the Service, were not high and were affected by seasonal elements, level of operational and training activities.

11.1.4 In regard to verbal/physical attacks, JH noted that there was a clear increase being seen across all emergency services. JH further noted that physical attacks reported within SFRS were mainly directed at fire appliances rather than individuals. JH confirmed that costs related to any damage or repairs required were recorded via the fleet system.

11.1.5 JH provided a brief outline of the proposals and intentions for a working group being convened to review attacks on emergency workers.

#### 11.1.6 The Committee scrutinised the report.

### 11.2 Contaminants Update

11.2.1 JH presented a report to the Committee to provide an update on the management of contaminants within the Service. The following key points were highlighted:

- Approval of budget for managing fire contaminants in 2024/25.
- Development of standard operating procedures was progressing well along with support training materials and video.
- Anticipated implementation by the end of the year.

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- 11.2.2 JH explained the links between the work with CivTech and Professor Stec. JH noted that the Service would continue to work with Professor Stec and FBU colleagues to look at wider contamination issues.
- 11.2.3 The Committee queried whether the Service were engaging with NHS colleagues in regard to potential contamination issues or support available. JH noted that this could be considered as part of health and wellbeing and health surveillance and also via links with business partners to raise awareness of the risk.
- 11.2.4 The Committee commented on the potential to communicate the level of investment being made in this area to raise awareness of how the Service were proactively making improvements to safeguard personnel. JH noted that a joint video comms between the Service and the FBU would be issued shortly to highlight the investment and the wider work being undertaken.
- 11.2.5 The Committee scrutinised the report.**

### **11.3 Draft Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24**

- 11.3.1 JH provided a verbal update and presentation on the draft Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24 for information and awareness. JH highlighted the revised format, including of engagement and proactive work, key performance indicators with additional narrative, benchmarking, and details on individual directorates etc.
- 11.3.2 The Committee commented on the narrative relating to future improvements however there was limited acknowledgment of good news stories. JH noted the comments and stated that this was a high level published report and there was the opportunity to interrogate the data further at a local level.
- 11.3.3 It was agreed to recirculate the survey slides to new Committee members for information (actioned directly after meeting).
- 11.3.4 This verbal update and presentation was presented for information only.**

## **12 AUDIT/INSPECTIONS**

### **12.1 HMSFI Inspection Action Plan Updates and Closing Reports**

- 12.1.1 LG presented the report updating the Committee on the progress against the action plan developed in response to the HMFSI Report relating to Mental Health and Wellbeing Provision. The following key points were highlighted:
- All actions raised have either been added or combined into the pre-existing mental health action plan.
  - Actions from the Suicide Prevention Subgroup have been incorporated into the overarching mental health action plan and would continue to be progressed/monitored.
  - Due to previous or ongoing work undertaken, actions were not required for some recommendations.
- 12.1.2 The Committee sought clarification on how the Service measures the impact of mental wellbeing champions, both on staff seeking assistance and on the champions themselves, and the provision of chaplaincy support.
- 12.1.3 LG advised that the mental health and wellbeing champions model was relatively new, however positive feedback was being provided from both colleagues and champions. LG further advised that there was an ongoing programme of continued professional development and peer support network in place for champions.
- 12.1.4 LG informed the Committee that the current chaplaincy provision was inherited from one of the legacy fire and rescue services and was supported by a Memorandum of Understanding. It was noted that this spiritual care was available to all but only provided on invitation from



individuals. LG noted that the Service was aware that this provision only represented a limited number of faith groups.

12.1.5 The Committee commented on the recent Deloitte's report on mental health in children relative to working families and the potential impact this issue could have in staff/workplaces.

12.1.6 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

## **12.2 Internal Audit and Inspection Updates**

12.2.1 LG presented the report updating the Committee on the progress against the action plans relating to internal audit and inspections where People Directorate is the lead area of the organisation. The following key points were highlighted:

- HMFSI Thematic Inspection of Organisational Culture: Currently within the information gathering phase.
- Scottish Vocational Qualifications: Good progress with several actions awaiting closure.
- On Call Workforce Planning: Good progress with several actions awaiting closure.
- Sickness Absence Management: Short extension requested for some actions.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Short extension requested for some actions.
- Closing report would be presented to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in due course.

12.2.2 **The Committee noted the report.**

## **13 PEOPLE COMMITTEE RISK REGISTER**

### **13.1 Committee Aligned Directorate Risk**

13.1.1 LG and AW presented the Risk Report, identifying Directorate risks and controls pertinent to the business of the Committee. It was noted that there were 3 risks reporting risk ratings of 15 or above, the following was highlighted:

- FSC018 which relates to the ability to recruit and retain skilled individuals to support the move to cloud-based environment and securing funding to upskill existing staff. Control measures in place were outlined. These included the review of current skills, structure, job descriptions and market allowance.

13.1.2 It was noted that discussions had taken place at the Change Committee in relation to concerns over the Service's preparedness for the increasing use of cloud-based technology and cyber security. LG advised that once the review and restructure of the ICT function had taken place, recruitment would be undertaken to fill any identified gaps. LG noted that the Service would also look to maximise opportunities to use talent programmes ie modern apprenticeships, graduate apprenticeships, etc.

13.1.3 The Committee requested that a risk spotlight be presented at the next meeting (September 2024) to help understand the Service's approach around attraction and retention of ICT/specialist talent through external recruitment processes (captured under Section 15).

13.1.4 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

## **14 PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

### **14.1 Employee Partnership Forum (EPF)**

14.1.1 SB provided the Committee with a verbal update noting that the EPF meeting on 9 May 2024 was stood down due to no items being tabled.

14.1.2 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**

### **14.2 Partnership Advisory Group (PAG)**

14.2.1 LG advised the Committee that the last scheduled meeting (28 May 2024) had been stood down due to no items being tabled.

14.2.2 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**

## **15 FORWARD PLANNING**

### **15.1 Committee Forward Plan Review**

15.1.1 The following items were noted for future meetings:

- Volume of calls to Safecall confidential reporting line and analysis of themes (March/June 2025)
- Broader paper on attraction and retention of talent within the Service.

15.1.2 **The Committee noted the Forward Plan.**

### **15.2 Items for Consideration at Future IGF, Board and Strategy Meetings**

15.2.1 The following items were noted for future IGF meetings:

- Policy on staff use of AI technology

## **16 REVIEW OF ACTIONS**

16.1 KM confirmed that no formal actions were recorded during the meeting.

## **17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

17.1 The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 12 September 2024.

17.2 There being no further matters to discuss, the public meeting closed at 1615 hrs.

*(Public meeting broke at 1615 hrs and reconvened in Private session at 1620 hrs)*

## **PRIVATE SESSION**

### **18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING: 7 MARCH 2024**

18.1 The minutes of the private meeting held on 7 March 2024 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

### **19 PRIVATE ACTION LOG**

19.1 Members noted the updated private Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.

### **20 REMUNERATION, APPOINTMENTS AND NOMINATIONS SUB COMMITTEE (RANSc) UPDATE**

20.1 The draft minutes of the RANSc meeting on 7 March 2023 had been circulated to the Committee and a verbal update from the meeting on 6 June 2024 was provided.

20.2 **The Committee noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

### **21 KEY CASE UPDATES 2023/24 – QUARTER 4**

21.1 LG provided a verbal update to the Committee providing an overview on employee relations cases which have resulted in claims to the Employment Tribunal.

21.2 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**