

## **HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

14 November 2008

### Present:-

Councillors Cann (Chair), Ford, Manning, Parker, Mrs. Parsons and Viney

### Apologies:-

Councillor Shadrick

#### **\*HRMDC/20. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2008 be signed as a correct record.

#### **\*HRMDC/21. Appointment of New Member**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Manning as a newly-appointed Member of the Committee (in place of Councillor Phillips who had resigned from the Authority).

The Chair also welcomed back Jane Sherlock (Head of Human Resources Management and Development) following her recent illness.

#### **\*HRMDC/22. Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to consider whether they had any **personal/personal and prejudicial interests** in items as set out on the agenda for this meeting and to declare any such interests at this time.

**NO** interests were declared.

#### **\*HRMDC/23. Staff Survey - Initial Results**

The Committee considered a report of DCFO Neil Gibbins (HRMDC/08/7) on the outcome of the preliminary analysis of the results of the staff survey undertaken earlier in the year. Operational Research Services (ORS) – an organisation with considerable experience nationally of the fire and rescue service – had been commissioned for assistance in compiling and undertaking the survey which had generated a 30% response rate. A summary of the survey results – identifying “high” spots and “hot” spots - had been issued to staff as a newsletter

A working group had been established to identify key issues arising from the survey results together with key areas for further work and action. It was proposed that a project team be established to work with representative bodies in progressing this matter.

Members commented in particular on the reported findings in relation to bullying and harassment. This was one of the issues that would be explored further in addressing the outcomes of the survey.

Additionally, the Head of Human Resources Management and Development commented that, since combination, several improved, more robust policies had been implemented (including a revised disciplinary policy). **With issues such as bullying and harassment work was still necessary, however, to instil trust and confidence in the processes currently in place and in ensuring that the expectations of both parties to any allegation were managed in terms of what might be a reasonable and realistic outcome of the process.**

Members were also informed that additional work was in progress to further analyse the outcome of the survey, by reference to responses to each individual question asked, and produce this in a readily-digestible form. This would be made available to Members and staff on completion.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that this Committee assumes oversight of the programme of projects to be established to deliver agreed improvement activities arising from the outcomes of the staff survey;
- (b) that Councillor Pat Parker be nominated to work with the Project Team established to address issues arising from the survey results;
- (c) that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.

***(SEE ALSO MINUTE \*HRMD/25 BELOW).***

#### **\*HRMDC/24. Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Human Resources Manager (HRMDC/08/8) on performance of the service against its target to reduce the levels of sickness absence to the regional average rate of 9 says/shifts lost per person per year by 2010/11. Good performance had been secured as a result of successful management action over the first two quarters of the current financial year which had seen a 13.7% decrease in sickness absence when compared to the same period last year.

A revised sickness absence procedure was currently the subject of consultation with representative bodies and would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Sickness absence was one of several performance measures contained within the current Corporate Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11 and which were reported on a quarterly basis to the Audit and Performance Review Committee.

This Committee would continue to receive information on sickness absence albeit with an emphasis more on management action to address the issue rather than statistical reporting.

Members asked that future reports contain comparative/benchmarking information – both regionally and nationally - on sickness absence recording.

#### **\*HRMDC/25. Work Programme for the Committee**

The Head of Human Resources Management and Development reported that, at its meeting on 14 September 2007, the Committee had agreed a work programme for future meetings linked to key objectives in the Corporate and Department Plans and including, amongst other things:-

- Workforce development
- The Health of the Organization
- The Equalities Framework
- the HRMD function and value for money.

Many of these themes had subsequently been progressed and new initiatives introduced as the Corporate and Department Plans have evolved.

Consequently, the Committee was invited to consider options for a future work programme. Items suggested included:-

- the outcomes of the recent staff survey, perhaps with a specific focus on bullying and harassment;
- the retained duty service (including retained to wholetime transfer procedures);
- the health of the organisation (sickness absence monitoring and management);
- training and development issues (including Urban Search and Rescue).

It was also suggested that alternative delivery mechanisms outside of the formal Committee structure might be considered to better facilitate the provision of information to Members.

**RESOLVED** that the Head of Human Resources Management and Development be asked to formulate a proposed work-programme for the Committee, including those issues identified above, for consideration at its next meeting.

***(SEE ALSO MINUTE \*HRMD/43 ABOVE)***

**\* DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.35hours.