

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

12 September 2008

Present:-

Councillors Cann (Chairman), Ford, Parker and Shadrick

Apologies:-

Councillors Mrs. Parsons and Viney

***HRMDC/11. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the special meeting held on 22 August 2008 be signed as a correct record.

***HRMDC/12. Informal Meetings**

(An item taken in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chair determined that this matter should be determined at this meeting in order to facilitate the convening of a meeting to discuss the options available for engaging with Chairs of the four committees on a more regular basis.

The Chair stated that he would like a meeting to be convened as soon as possible with the Clerk and the other three chairs of committees to discuss the issues he had raised recently. It was noted that this matter would be pursued with the Clerk.

***HRMDC/13. Declarations of Interest**

Members of the Committee were invited to declare any personal/personal and prejudicial interests they may have in item(s) to be considered at the current meeting in accordance with the Authority's approved Code of Conduct.

No interests were declared.

***HRMDC/14. Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Human Resources Manager (HRMDC/08/4) that set out the position in respect of sickness absence with particular reference to the costs of absence, long term absence and the reasons behind this and on the findings of the National Fire and Rescue Service absence management working group.

Reference was made to the following points:

- That sickness absence had improved significantly in the first quarter of 2008/09 with a reduction overall by 15% when compared with the same period in 2007/08;

- The target for absence was 9 days/shifts lost per person by 2010/11 and the service was down to almost 10 days currently;
- The greatest reduction had been in long term sickness absence with a reduction of 16.8% when compared with the same period in 2007/08;
- The cost of sickness absence was £348,785 for the first quarter of 2008/09;
- The findings of the national report commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Communities and Local Government (CLG) found that there were 3 overarching factors for successful attendance management and these were set out in the report. It was noted that much of the work undertaken within the service was comparable with the findings of the national research.

The Chief Fire Officer drew attention to the point that there was scope for the costs of sickness absence to be misrepresented but he stressed that it was important not to do this. The Human Resources Manager added that there had been a lot of work undertaken to address sickness and that the working party would be releasing its draft absence management policy shortly for consultation. It was noted that regular reports would be submitted to this Committee to keep it apprised of the action being taken.

***HRMDC/15. Firefighter Recruitment**

The Committee received for information a report of the Human Resources Manager (HRMDC/08/5) that set out the proposals in relation to staff transferring from the Retained Duty System to Wholetime, information in respect of workforce planning and details of the National Firefighter Selection process.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that, although the service was not pursuing a graduate entry scheme at this stage, it was waiting for the outcome of the scheme undertaken by the London Fire Brigade with interest. He added that such a scheme may be a way of addressing equality issues such as attracting more women into the service in due course.

***HRMDC/16. Corporate Equality Scheme**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources Management and Development (HRMDC/08/6) that set out details of work being undertaken on the development of a single equality scheme for the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 to 2018 and the National Framework Document 2008 to 2011. In addition, the report set out the proposals for a corporate identity for the Equality Scheme.

The Equality and Diversity Advisor gave a presentation at the meeting in respect of the requirements under the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the 6 equality strands identified within this, together with information in respect of how the Corporate Equality Scheme would be developed.

Councillor Cann proposed (and was seconded by Councillor Shadrick) “that Councillor Pat Parker should be nominated as the representative to work with the Equality and Diversity Team on the development and implementation of this scheme”.

RESOLVED

- (a) To endorse the title of the Corporate Equality Scheme as “Making The Connections”;
- (b) That Councillor Pat Parker be nominated as the member of the Committee identified to work with the Equality & Diversity team on the development and implementation of this Scheme;
- (c) That, subject to (a) and (b) above, to note the contents of this report.

***HRMDC/17. Staff Survey**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated the Committee on the position in respect of the recent Staff Survey that had been undertaken, which was the first ever Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service employee survey. To ensure that the survey was independent, Opinion Research Services (ORS), the contractor providing consultation services to the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA), had been commissioned to undertake the survey. 647 responses had been received which represented a significant response for the organisation in statistical terms. A Group had been established to work on analysis of the results and it was anticipated that a further report would be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting in November 2008.

***HRMDC/18. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act, namely information relating to consultations and negotiations in connection with a labour relations matter between the Authority and its employees.

***HRMDC/19. Job Evaluation**

The Human Resources Manager gave an update on the progress being made in respect of the Job Evaluation exercise for non uniformed staff.

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

The meeting started at 10.00 and finished at 11.35 hours