

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

14 January 2010

Present:-

Councillors Boyd, Burridge-Clayton, Manning, Mrs. Nicholson and Wallace

Apologies:-

Councillors Cann and Turner

***HRMDC/10. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2009 be signed as a correct record.

***HRMDC/11. Declarations of Interest**

Members of the Committee 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/12. Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Head of Human Resources Management & Development (HRMDC/10/1) that updated the Committee on the position in respect of Service performance on both short term and long term sickness absence levels and the reasons behind this.

The corporate target for sickness absence was “to reduce the levels of sickness absence to the regional average of 9.0 days by 2010/11” The target for 2009/10 was 9.6 days per person and the actual performance to November 2009 was at an average 5.36 days as compared with 6.84 days in the previous year. This was a reduction of 16.7%.

The Head of Human Resources Management and Development made reference to a report to be considered by the Committee later in the agenda (report DSFRA/10/5 refers) that set out details of proposed targets for sickness absence in 2010/11. This was the final year of a three year target and there had been some discussion as to whether the Service should consider a more stretching, longer term target which was benchmarked against other UK fire and rescue services in order to move towards the vision of an “excellent” performing service.

Attention was drawn to the increase in sickness absence level for Control staff in October 2009. The Head of Human Resources management and Development reported that this was probably due to the uncertainty of control staff as a result of the Regional Control Centre (RCC) project together with seasonal colds and flu. Work had been undertaken with Control Staff to try to allay fears including one to one sessions. Forward recruitment for the RCC was due to commence shortly and therefore, there would be a clearer picture of the staff displacement and the impact for the Service.

***HRMDC/13. Wholetime Recruitment Campaign 2009**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources Management & Development (HRMD/10/2) that set out the work that had been undertaken to date on recruitment leading to the appointment of a total of 31 firefighters in 2009/10.

The Head of Human Resources Management and Development advised the Committee that sufficient appointments had been made as a result of this recruitment campaign and as a result, a decision had been taken not to maintain a waiting list in the future. It was noted that even though the rate of female applicants attracted was higher than previous recruitment levels, this had not resulted in increased numbers of females being appointed. The Service needed to address this in the future with positive, focussed action to move towards meeting the recruitment target. Analysis of results showed that female candidates “dropped out” during the physical test stages of the recruitment process. There had also been issues identified in respect of the initial sift of applications that had been carried out in accordance with the procedures set down in the National Firefighter Selection process. It was felt that this may have removed a disproportionate number of candidates at a very early stage and therefore, the Committee was asked to consider reviewing the Commitment to Diversity and Integrity (CDI) weighting in the process to address this in future recruitment campaigns. This, together with other measures set out within the recommendations in report HRMDC/10/2, was supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the CDI weightings in the process be removed i.e. all PQA questions are marked (no sift on Q1) and a separate pass mark at interview is not used;
- (b) That all practical tests are reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose, job related and do not have an adverse impact on under-represented groups;
- (c) That a rolling programme be introduced for WT recruitment to run concurrently with the RDS one. This will become feasible with the introduction of the e-recruitment system;
- (d) That targeted action interventions are considered to aid the recruitment of under-represented groups. The organisations has signed up to the governments ‘stretch targets’ for recruitment and a small working party has been formed to look at suitable strategies;
- (e) That, subject to (a) to (d) above, the report be noted.

***HRMDC/14. The New Fire and Rescue Service Equalities Framework and the current "Migration" Assessment**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources Management & Development (HRMDC/10/2) that detailed the launch recently of the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRS EF) against which the Authority was required to measure its equality and diversity outcomes. The new Framework superseded the Equality Standard for Local Government (EFLG). It was based on the same principles in the EFLG and was outcome focussed. There were three achievement levels, namely, Developing, Achieving and Excellent and the report set out the migration level for DSFRS together with the progress made towards implementation of the new Framework to date.

RESOLVED to endorse and adopt the Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework ("The Journey to Excellence") as the framework against which the Authority will measure its equality & diversity outcomes.

***HRMDC/15. Positive Action Strategy - "STAIRWAY"**

The Committee considered a report of the of Human Resources Management & Development (HRMDC/10/4) that set out details of the positive action strategy "STAIRWAY", which aimed to meet the commitment of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in respect of its recruitment targets.

It was noted that grant funding in the sum of £34,000 had been secured from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in order to support the work required to achieve the stretch targets set out within the strategy. Concern was expressed in respect of the grant funding should the Service be in the position that the target was not achieved in the future.

RESOLVED that the strategy entitled "STAIRWAY" be endorsed.

***HRMDC/16. Target Setting for Goal 2 of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Corporate Plan 2010/11 to 2012/13**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Human Resources Management and Development (HRMDC/10/5) that set out options in respect of targets under Goal 2 "to be an employer of choice" for inclusion within the Corporate Plan for 2010/11 to 2012/13.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the following targets be included within Goal 2 of the Corporate Plan for 2010/11 to 2012/13:
 - (i) By 2013, the percentage of recruits from minority ethnic groups across the whole organisation to be 7.29%;
 - (ii) by 2013, 18% of firefighters recruited into the service to be women;
 - (iii) to reduce the proportion of working days/shifts lost per person due to sickness absence to 9.0 days by 2010/11;
 - (iv) to ensure that 90% of retained posts are filled;

- (b) That, with the inclusion of the targets set out above, the Corporate Plan for 20010/11 to 2012/13 be submitted to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority on 19 February 2010 for final approval.

NB. Minute HRMDC/15 above also refers.

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.20hours.