

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

14 April 2010

Present:-

Councillors Boyd, Burridge-Clayton, Cann, Manning, Mrs. Nicholson and Wallace (Chairman).

Apologies:-

Councillor Turner

***HRMDC/17. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 14 January 2010 be signed as a correct record.

***HRMDC/18. Determination of Substantive Membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure Stage 2 Panel**

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

The Chairman determined that this item should be considered as a matter of urgency to enable the Committee to consider the substantive membership of the Panel without delay in the event that a further appeal under the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures should be submitted to the Authority.

The Clerk advised that membership of the Panel should be taken from the Human Resources Management and Development Committee although he suggested that provision should be made for substitutions in accordance with Standing Orders.

Councillor Burridge-Clayton proposed (and was seconded by Councillor Boyd):

“that the membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure Stage 2 Panel should comprise of Councillors Wallace (Chair), Boyd and Manning and that substitutes (in accordance with Standing Order 36) should be taken from the membership of the Human Resources Management and Development Committee in the first instance.

The motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure Stage 2 Panel should comprise of Councillors Wallace (Chair), Boyd and Manning and that substitutes (in accordance with Standing Order 36) should be taken from the membership of the Human Resources Management and Development Committee in the first instance.

***HRMDC/19. Declarations of Interest**

Members of the Committee were asked 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/20. Staff Survey**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/10/6) that gave an update in respect of the progress made against the programme of activities identified as a result of the Staff Survey undertaken in 2008. The report also set out details of the methodology, communications plan and timetable for the Staff Survey in 2010.

Reference was made to the results of the Staff Survey undertaken in 2008 and how the improvements identified as a result of this exercise had been incorporated within the Corporate and Service Plans. It was noted that, since publication of the Staff Survey in 2010, there had been a 35% response rate, which was a better return than in 2008 already. The results would be compared with the 2008 survey and additionally, with work that had been undertaken on a recent survey with retained duty system staff and their partners.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Member Champion for Equality and Diversity continue to be part of the Project Steering Group for the outcome of staff survey(s);
- (b) that the Committee continue to oversee the progress of actions identified in the staff survey(s), and;
- (c) that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.

***HRMDC/21. Update On Positive Action Strategy**

The Committee received for information a presentation given by the Director of People and Organisational Development. The presentation covered the work that had been undertaken on both the Positive Action Strategy and "Considering Needs" and briefing notes were circulated to the Committee at the meeting for information. In addition a copy of a new information video entitled "All Fired Up" was shown at the meeting. This had been instigated to encourage people to apply to join the Service, the cost of which had been funded from within the resources provided by the Government to support work undertaken on the "stretch" recruitment targets.

***HRMDC/22. The European Community (EC) Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Delivery (HRMDC/10/7) that set out details of the implication of the EC Drivers Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles Regulations (561/2006) which limited driving time and ensured that proper break and rest periods were taken in order to prevent road traffic collisions. Reference was also made to the impact of these Regulations on all employees who drive an "in scope" vehicle either for the Fire and Rescue Service or in other employment or voluntary work.

The Director of Service Delivery informed the Committee of the work that had been undertaken to date to minimise the impact of these Regulations on both staff and the Service. He added that there was now less than 10 staff affected; a position which had been achieved through a combination of working closely with the employers of the staff concerned together with a pragmatic approach in respect of the interpretation of the “rest” requirements. This approach had been adopted on a national basis as best practice. It was noted, in addition, that the new Gartan availability system currently being piloted by the Service would assist staff in this regard as it would enable the accurate recording of working hours which could be accessed as evidence if required.

Reference was made to the associated Working Time Directive and it was noted that the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) was looking into this. The Chief Fire Officer commented that this was also being pursued through the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) and through the National Retained Duty System (RDS) Working Group. He circulated a copy of the first stage of the consultation on the Working Time Directive for information and indicated that the Service would be submitting a response which would be circulated to the Chair of the Committee for comments prior to submission to the European Commission. A copy of the response would be submitted to the next meeting for information.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the management actions to limit the impact on employees of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service the impact of the above Regulations be endorsed, and;
- (b) that, subject to (a) above, the report be received and noted.

***HRMDC/23. Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/10/8) that set out the progress that had been made to date with absence management and which highlighted the service performance in respect of both short and long term absence.

The corporate target for sickness absence was “to reduce the levels of sickness absence to the regional average of 9.0 days/shifts lost per person by 2010/11”. The target for 2009/10 was 9.6 days/shifts lost per person and the actual performance to February 2010 was 7.23 days. This represented an improvement in performance of 18.8% to date although the year end figures were not available as yet. Reference was made to the ongoing work being undertaken to reduce the levels of sickness, including return to work interviews, sickness panels and interventions such as Occupational Health referrals and mediation.

The Director of People and Organisations reported that the new Performance Development Review (PDR) process was to be launched in April 2010 and that this would also assist with the work being undertaken to reduce sickness absence.

***HRMDC/24. 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 involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to consultations on labour relations matters between the Authority and its employees.

***HRMDC/25. Update On Establishment**

(An item taken in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during consideration of which the press and public were excluded from the meeting).

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/10/9) that gave an update on the position regarding establishment levels and which set out the approach to managing potential vacancies arising in the future in the light of the work being undertaken on the Service Reviews.

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.38 hours