

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

20 September 2010

Present:-

Councillors Cann (Chair), Healey (vice Mrs Turner), Manning and Woodman (vice Burridge-Clayton).

Apologies:-

Councillors Bown, Boyd and Mrs Nicholson.

1. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2010 be signed as a correct record.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members of the Committee were asked to consider whether they had any personal or 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.

3. **Absence Management**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/10/14) that set out the overall performance of the Service in relation to sickness absence management in 2010/11 and which highlighted the position in relation to long term absence levels in particular.

It was noted that there had been an 11.5% reduction in overall sickness absence to date, although there were some cases of long term sickness absence which had impacted upon this figure. A breakdown of the long term sickness absence by staff group and by length of time was set out within the report for information. Work was being undertaken with the individual involved to try to reduce the long term sickness absence levels.

Reference was made to the Service's performance in comparison to other services within the south west region as it was felt that the target set may not be sufficiently challenging. The Director of People and Organisational Development advised the Committee that the target of 9.0 days or shifts lost was set against the average but the regional performance had since improved to 7.8 days or shifts lost. This would be taken into account and a more ambitious target was likely to be set for 2011/12.

The Committee referred to the point that 38% of managers did not carry out the required return to work interviews following sickness absence. It was noted that these interviews were carried out where there were repeated incidences of sickness absence but that training was being provided together with amendments to the sickness absence policy to ensure that this message was understood.

4. Restriction of Pensions Tax Relief

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/10/15) that set out details of a consultation exercise that had been carried out by the Government in relation to the issue of pension's tax relief. The proposal put forward for consultation involved reducing the annual allowance for pension tax relief and the report explored the potential impact that this may have on staff, particularly the "middle earners".

5. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Safety Audit (QSA)

Between 12 and 21 September 2010, a QSA of the total Service Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) was undertaken using "Issue 4" of the QSA system as developed by RoSPA. The QSA system was based primarily on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication HSG 65 "Successful Health and Safety Management".

In the past, traditional monitoring systems within organisations focused on the reporting and investigation of accidents, together with detailed compliance inspections of workplaces. Research has shown, however, that in 70% of accidents, the underlying causes have been failures within the HSMS. The QSA therefore not only concentrated on HSMS but also included an examination of compliance with a number of key areas of legislation.

The Committee received for information a presentation given by the Health and Safety Manager at the meeting that informed the Committee of the results of the Audit and which indicated the action being taken to address the points raised within it.

6. Staff Survey

The Committee received for information an update given by the Director of People and Organisational Development that apprised the Committee of the results of the Staff Survey undertaken in 2010 which had now been analysed by ORS. The initial feedback received was that there had been an increase in the number of staff responding to 38% in 2010 as compared with 30% in 2008. Of the respondents, this mirrored the makeup of the workforce in terms of uniformed, non uniformed, retained duty and fire control staff. Reference was made to some initial highlights which included there had been an increase in the number of staff who agreed that the Service was an "employer of choice" from 32% in 2008 to 64% in 2010. In terms of the Service being a "provider of services", the response indicated an improvement in this area in addition from 50% in 2008 to 79% in 2010.

Councillor Cann commented that he felt that the Authority was much more open and transparent and that more information was being communicated across the Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer added that a lot of work had been undertaken in this area and that the results were now starting to show. It was noted that a report setting out the full findings of the survey would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

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

The meeting started at 14.00hours and finished at 15.05hours.