

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

17 June 2011

Present:-

Councillors Boyd, Brooksbank, Cann, Horsfall, Randall-Johnson (vice Bown) and Wright

Apologies:-

Councillors Bown and Burridge-Clayton

***HRMDC/1. Election of Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Cann be appointed Chair of the Committee until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2012.

***HRMDC/2. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2011 be signed as a correct record.

***HRMDC/3. 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/4. Election of Vice Chair**

RESOLVED that this item be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

***HRMDC/5. Overview of Union Recognition Arrangements**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/11/7) that provided information in respect of the collective working arrangements with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. The report included details of the arrangements that were in place currently for the recognised trade unions, namely the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU), Fire Officers' Association (FOA), Retained Firefighters' Union (RFU) and UNISON (for non uniformed staff). Details of the facilities that were currently provided for the trade unions were also provided, together with an overview of the collective arrangements.

In response to questions, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had worked hard to foster good relations with the Chairman and Secretary of the FBU. He added that the union representatives had been given time off to undertake their duties for the FBU and to clear a backlog of work that had arisen as a result of combination. The release of these staff from station had thus achieved the intended result and smoothed industrial relations.

Councillor Boyd commented that he felt that there was a much better relationship in place with FBU recently but that he would encourage the exchange of ideas and more open opinions rather than negativity from the union. The Chairman enquired as to whether discussions would be on a unilateral basis or regional. The Chief Fire Officer replied that current discussions were on a local basis but there were instances where regional officials may become involved. As such, the model of engagement may need to be modified.

***HRMDC/6. European Focus Group - Update**

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the European Union (EU) was to debate the removal of the "opt out" clause on the Working Time Directive in November 2011. This currently permitted staff to opt out of the requirement to be bound by the 48 hour restriction on working time. The removal of this clause would have a significant impact on the Service in terms of how services were provide and would present an additional financial burden. There were a number of other EU Countries that did not wish to see this opt out removed and work was being undertaken to try to influence this decision.

The Committee was advised that the Chief Fire Officer had recently initiated and secured agreement from 27 EU member states for a pan European strategy to improve public and fire fighter safety across Europe. This will be launched formally in the EU Parliament in October 2011. The Chief Fire Officer, along with the Director of People and Organisational Development, also represent the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) on a European Focus Group which was meeting to further develop engagement in Europe. Congratulations were extended by the Committee to the Chief Fire Officer and Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development for the work that had been undertaken.

***HRMDC/7. Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/11/8) that provided details of the Service performance for absence levels in 2010/11 as compared with the target set of 9.0 days/shifts lost per person.

It was noted that the actual performance in 2010/11 was 8.25 days/shifts lost per person, which was a retrograde step when compared with performance in 2009/10 (8.02 days/shifts lost per person), although this exceeded the target set. In terms of performance against other organisations, the Service was below the 8.3 days average for the public sector but above the private sector average of 5.8 days. The Service would need to reduce absence levels by 22.42% to achieve the national average of 6.4 days.

The Head of Human Resources circulated additional information at the meeting on sickness absence for the period May 2009 to March 2011 that showed the trends that had arisen over this period. This showed a peak in March 2011 but there was no apparent, single reason for this. He reported that the Service was in the 3rd quartile of performance for the country and it was recognised that there was still a long way to go. The Committee indicated that this was a good report, however, and that the Service should continue with the action being taken to reduce the levels of sickness absence within the organisation.

***HRMDC/8. Determination of Membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure Stage 2 Panel**

The Committee was **RECOMMENDED** to appoint (from amongst its membership) 3 members to serve on the Firefighters' Pension Scheme internal Dispute Resolution Panel until the first meeting of the Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2012.

RESOLVED that Councillors Bown, Boyd and Wright be appointed to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Panel until the first meeting of the Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2012.

***HRMDC/9. 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 will involve 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/10. Emerging Industrial Relations Committee (IRC) Issues**

(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 Head of Human Resources gave an update at the meeting in respect of emerging industrial relations issues, including those related to Gartan and retained duty system contracts.

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.10hours.