

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

25 June 2012

Present:-

Councillors Bown, Brooksbank, Cann, Chugg, Dyke (vice Horsfall), J Smith and Woodman (vice Burrige-Clayton).

Apologies:-

Councillors Burrige-Clayton and Horsfall

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Bown be elected Chair of the Committee until the first meeting after the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in May 2013.

***HRMDC/2. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2012 be signed as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Brooksbank be elected Vice Chair of the Committee until the first meeting after the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in May 2013.

***HRMDC/4. 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 declare any such interests at this time.

No interests were declared.

***HRMDC/5. Absence Management & Health of the Organisation**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development (HRMDC/12/8) attached (page 4) that set out the progress made with absence management, including an update on aspects linked to the overall health of the organisation.

The areas set out within the report included, amongst others:

- Sickness absence performance in 2011/12;
- A detailed breakdown of long term sickness;
- The main reasons behind sickness absence;
- Levels of wellbeing and referrals to counselling;
- Staff turnover figures.

The Human Resources Manager stated that the level of sickness absence in 2011/12 was 8.02 days/shifts lost per person as compared with 2010/11 when it was 8.25 days per person. Reference was made to the point that, although the figures showed a downward trend which was very positive, the March sickness absence level was higher than other months in each of the last 3 years. The sickness absence figures compared well with other public sector organisations which were at an average of 9 days and the private sector which was 7 days. The Committee also requested information on the comparisons with regional colleagues. The Human Resources Manager reported that he had been advised that this was not available for public release currently but that he would request the information again.

There had been an improvement in long term sickness during 2011/12 with only 4 staff currently absent for a period greater than 6 months. The number of uniformed staff on long terms sickness had increased, however, but this was mainly attributable to non-work related physical injuries or operations.

It was noted that the level of referrals to counselling in Somerset remained at a much higher level than in Devon. There was no direct explanation of this and it was suggested that perhaps the Service should look into why the level of referrals in Devon was not as high.

In the light of the point that there had been a continuous reduction in sickness absence for the Service since combination in 2007, there was a discussion in respect of the frequency for the submission of reports on this matter to the Committee. The view was expressed that this information could be considered annually in conjunction with the health of the organisation trends unless there was an adverse trend appearing during the course of the year. Following a discussion, Councillor Woodman proposed (and was seconded by Councillor Chugg):

“that the monitoring information in respect of sickness absence should be considered by the Committee on a 6 monthly basis”.

Councillor Dyke proposed an amendment (and was seconded by Councillor Brooksbank):

“that the monitoring information in respect of sickness absence should be considered annually by the Committee”. Upon a vote (2 for 4 against), the amendment was lost.

The Committee then voted on the motion put by Councillor Woodman. Upon a vote (4 for, 2 against), the motion was carried.

RESOLVED

- (a) that future reporting on Absence Management be consolidated within the Service Performance Management reports that will include Absence Management as an external facing measure and be considered on a six monthly basis by the Committee,
- (b) that Health of the Organisation trends be considered annually by the Committee.
- (c) That, subject to (a) and (b) above, the sickness absence management data contained within this report be noted.

***HRMDC/6. Training Facilities**

The Committee received for information a presentation given by the Director of People and Organisational Development at the meeting covering the work of the Training Academy and the facilities that the Service had at its disposal to deliver the training function.

***HRMDC/7. Pensions Auto Enrolment**

The Director of People and Organisational Development reported upon the position in respect of pension's auto enrolment following the Government's recent workplace reforms. She advised that all staff were encouraged to join a pension scheme, namely:

- The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (for both wholetime and retained staff);
- Local Government Pension Scheme (for non-uniformed staff); or,

It was noted that staff were required to auto enrol within a pension scheme as a result of these reforms but could decide to opt out up to 3 years following this. There was a cost associated with this for the Service which was in the region of an additional £531,000 if all staff decided to remain within a scheme once auto enrolled in August 2013. As a result, the position had been carefully reviewed and a decision had been made to include half of this amount within the budget for 2012/13.

Reference was made to the funds within the pension scheme and if individuals had a choice as to how these were invested. The Director of People and Organisational Development stated that she would ask the Treasurer to the Authority to respond separately on this matter.

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.40hours