

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

22 January 2014

Present:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Brooksbank, Burrige-Clayton, Chugg, Horsfall, Knight and J Smith

***HRMDC/11. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2013 be signed as a correct record.

***HRMDC/12. Learning and Development Strategy 2013-16**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/1) in respect of the new Learning and Development Strategy which defined the current context for training and development and how workforce competences needed to evolve in order to support the Service's broader strategic aims. The key considerations in setting this Strategy included the need to continue to ensure firefighter safety within a context of decreasing budgets year on year for the Service.

The Committee also received a presentation given by the Training Academy Manager that outlined:

- The context to the document and the need for change;
- The key objectives of the Strategy;
- Details of the procedures to be implemented in order to meet the objectives set out within the Strategy.

***HRMDC/13. Absence Management & Health of the Organisation**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/2) that detailed the sickness absence statistics for the period April to September 2013, the monitoring of which was undertaken as part of the Service's internal performance measures. The report also set out the actions that had been taken by the Service to mitigate against sickness absence, including the introduction of counselling and physiotherapy services, access by managers to electronic sickness records and stress management training.

It was noted that there had been a reduction in sickness absence for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2013/14 as compared with the same period in 2012/13 and that this was maintaining a downward trend for the Service. A comparison had also been undertaken with other industry benchmarks and this showed that the national average was 7.4 days lost per person whilst the figure for the public services was 9.3 days lost per person. It was encouraging to see that the current performance for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service at 7.8 days lost per person was moving towards the national all sector rate of 7.4 days lost per person.

The Committee congratulated the Service on this performance but stated that there was no room for complacency. It was requested that the information be included in future reports to the Committee in terms of the numbers of people off sick as it was felt that the percentage changes could be misleading.

***HRMDC/14. Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP)**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/3) that sought guidance from the Committee in terms of how it wished to proceed with the determination of future IDRPs in the light of a request from the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to be able to represent appellants during a hearing.

The Director of People and Commercial Services confirmed that the Stage 2 IDRPs process was a written procedure normally in accordance with the guidance in Annex 12 of the Appeals Procedure relating to the IDRPs. Each case submitted was considered on an individual basis and the IDRPs Panel was able to request further information as necessary to determine a case. It was noted that FBU felt that it would be able to present a case more fully if it was able to represent an appellant at a hearing rather than it just being a written submission.

A discussion ensued and the view was expressed that not all cases would require a hearing or the FBU to present a case but the facility should be available in the event it was required. The point was also made that the appellant should also be present if a hearing was deemed necessary by the Panel and not just a representative. The Human Resources Manager clarified that if the appellant was given the opportunity to attend a hearing with a representative to present a case, this would make the process akin to a grievance hearing.

Following a full debate of the issues, Councillor J Smith **MOVED** (which was seconded by Councillor Burrige-Clayton):

“that, in future cases submitted under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP), the appellant should be given the option of attending a hearing at Stage 2 if they chose to with a representative”.

The motion was then put to the vote (6 for, 0 against, no abstentions), following which it was:

RESOLVED that, in future cases submitted under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP), the appellant should be given the option of attending a hearing at Stage 2 if they chose to with a representative.

HRMDC/15. Redundancy Compensation Rates

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/4) that set out the background on how the redundancy multiplier was arrived at and which also set out details of the current multiplier in use by other fire and rescue services and local authorities within Devon and Somerset for comparative purposes.

Reference was made to the point that there was currently no statutory power for a fire and rescue service to enhance redundancy rates for its uniformed staff, although this was currently being reviewed at a national level. The Committee was invited to review the current multiplier in place for the Service taking into account budgetary and financial issues and the organisational workforce planning needs of the Service.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority be recommended to approve that there should be no change to the current redundancy compensation rates (a multiplier of 2), and;

- (b) That the Committee continues to monitor progress with reduction in staff numbers associated with the implementation of the Corporate Plan, and how the use of voluntary redundancies can support this, with a view to further reviewing the redundancy compensation rates in the next financial year.

***HRMDC/16. 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act, namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and its employees.

***HRMDC/17. Industrial Action - Update**

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

The Director of People and Commercial Services updated the Committee on the current position in respect of the national dispute between the Government and the Fire Brigades' Union in respect of the proposed new Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015, together with details of the Service's business continuity arrangements for industrial action already taken and in the event of further industrial action.

*** DELEGATED MATTERS WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.45hours