

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

11 June 2015

Present:-

Councillors Bown, Burridge-Clayton, Healey (vice Chugg), Horsfall and Knight

Apologies:-

Received from Councillors Chugg and Wheeler.

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Bown be appointed Chair of this Committee until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2016.

***HRMDC/2. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2014 be signed as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED that Councillor Chugg be appointed Vice Chair of this Committee until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2016.

***HRMDC/4. Equality Strategy: 'Safer Lives, Brighter Futures' Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Operations (HRMDC/15/1) that set out the progress made in terms of the Equality Strategy and in ensuring that the Authority was meeting its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

The work that was highlighted in the report included, amongst others:

- The Service was successful in remaining in the top 100 employers within the Stonewall Equality Index competing with almost 400 public and private sector organisations;
- A positive action plan had been set out to improve gender diversity within the Service;
- There had been a review of the Service's Core Values which had previously been agreed nationally but work had been undertaken to introduce locally agreed core values and a behavioural framework to back this up;
- Dyslexia awareness training was being undertaken;
- Peer assessment against the "Excellent" level of the national Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework which provided a means of measuring and evidencing good practice whilst allowing thorough consideration of the different needs of people in the Service. Although this continued to be utilised as a guide for good practice, it had been decided not to proceed with the peer assessment against the "excellent" level of the framework as this was too resource intensive in this financial year.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the decision not to undertake the planned peer assessment against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework in 2015/16 be approved; and
- (b) Subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

***HRMDC/5. Retirement and Re-Employment**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/15/2) that set out requests that had been made by both uniformed and non-uniformed support staff for retirement and re-employment in accordance with the requirements of the Authority's Pay Policy Statement.

RESOLVED that the requests for retirement & re-employment as identified in paragraphs 2.4 and 3.2 of this report be approved.

***HRMDC/6. Pensions Discretions**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/15/3) that outlined the changes that had been made to public sector pension schemes and specifically, to the Local Government Pension Scheme and the various Firefighter Pension Schemes.

Given the considerable number of changes to the schemes, the Committee noted that a separate workshop was to be convened to discuss the issues with Members. A date would be agreed for this prior to the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 29 July 2015 at which the appropriate pensions discretions would be determined.

***HRMDC/7. Appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/15/4) in respect of the proposed appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel (IDRP) which had delegated authority to consider and determine complaints made by individuals under Stage 2 of the Firefighters' Pensions Scheme Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure.

RESOLVED that Councillors Bown, Burridge-Clayton and Knight be appointed to the IDRP Panel with delegated authority to consider and determine complaints made by individuals under Stage 2 of the Firefighters' Pensions Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure.

***HRMDC/8. Absence Management**

The Director of People and Commercial Services gave a presentation at the meeting that set out the work that was being undertaken to manage the level of sickness within the Service as compared against the measures set out within the Authority's approved Corporate Plan which sought a continuing reduction in absence levels.

The Committee noted that there had been a reducing trend on sickness absence since combination in 2007 reaching its lowest point in 2013/14 when this reached 6.86 days lost per person. In 2014/15, however, this increased to 9.78 days lost per and therefore, an action plan had been set out to redress performance in this area.

The action plan contained the following measures:

- Continued measuring and monitoring of absence levels;
- Analysis of absence management data;
- Measures to address the cultural aspects within the service, including the development of an Organisational Development Strategy;
- The need to improve communications on absence with staff;
- The availability of supportive health and wellbeing initiatives;
- Staff training.

Reference was made to issues that had been experienced with the new software for reporting sickness absence and the action that was being taken to remedy this. An amendment to the software was required but this had been delayed due to other more pressing projects within the Service such as the implementation of the Networked Fire Control Systems Project (NFCSP) and the Training Records System, both of which were risk critical and had to be prioritised above other work. The Committee indicated that it would wish to see the software changes instigated as soon as possible and enquired as to the current timescales for this. It was understood that this work would be undertaken in July 2015 and the Committee requested a report to its next meeting setting out the progress made with this.

The Committee also received a presentation at the meeting by Firefighter Richard McGhee in respect of the work that he had been undertaking in conjunction with MIND in respect of the Blue Light “Time to Change” campaign which was aimed at raising awareness of mental health issues within the emergency services.

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.45hours