



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

M. Pearson
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

To: The Chair and Members of the Human
Resources Management & Development
Committee

(see below)

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

Friday, 23rd June, 2017

A meeting of the Human Resources Management & Development Committee will be held on the above date, **commencing at 10.00 am in Conference Room B, Somerset House, Service Headquarters** to consider the following matters.

M. Pearson
Clerk to the Authority

AGENDA

PLEASE REFER TO THE NOTES AT THE END OF THE AGENDA LISTING SHEETS

- 1 **Election of Chair**
- 2 **Apologies**
- 3 **Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)**
of the previous meeting held on 24 March 2017 attached.
- 4 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**
Items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.
- 5 **Election of Vice Chair**

PART 1 - OPEN COMMITTEE

6 Retirement & Re-employment (Pages 5 - 8)

Report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Service Improvement (HRMDC/17/6) attached.

7 Appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure Panel (IDRP) (Pages 9 - 10)

Report of the Clerk to the Authority (HRMDC/17/7) attached.

8 Absence Management & Health of the Organisation (Pages 11 - 24)

Report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Improvement (HRMDC/17/8) attached.

9 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RECOMMENDATION that in accordance with 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 may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act:

- Paragraph 2 (information likely to reveal the identity of an individual);

PART 2 - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

10 National Fire & Rescue Service Occupational Health Performance Report April 2016 to March 2017 (Pages 25 - 54)

The National Fire & Rescue Service Occupational Health Performance Report for April 2016 to March 2017 is attached for reference. This document is associated with the item at agenda item 9 in Part 1 of this meeting and the Committee is asked to note the contents.

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO SIGN THE ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Membership:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Best, Burridge-Clayton, Chugg (Vice-Chair), Hannaford, Peart and Thomas

NOTES

1.	<u>Access to Information</u> Any person wishing to inspect any minutes, reports or lists of background papers relating to any item on this agenda should contact the person listed in the “Please ask for” section at the top of this agenda.
2.	<u>Reporting of Meetings</u> Any person attending a meeting may report (film, photograph or make an audio recording) on any part of the meeting which is open to the public – unless there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman - and use any communication method, including the internet and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), to publish, post or otherwise share the report. The Authority accepts no liability for the content or accuracy of any such report, which should not be construed as representing the official, Authority record of the meeting. Similarly, any views expressed in such reports should not be interpreted as representing the views of the Authority. Flash photography is not permitted and any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Democratic Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.
3.	<u>Declarations of Interests (Authority Members only)</u>
	(a). <u>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</u> If you have any disclosable pecuniary interests (as defined by Regulations) in any item(s) to be considered at this meeting then, unless you have previously obtained a dispensation from the Authority’s Monitoring Officer, you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i). disclose any such interest at the time of commencement of consideration of the item in which you have the interest or, if later, as soon as it becomes apparent to you that you have such an interest;(ii). leave the meeting room during consideration of the item in which you have such an interest, taking no part in any discussion or decision thereon; and(iii). not seek to influence improperly any decision on the matter in which you have such an interest. If the interest is sensitive (as agreed with the Monitoring Officer), you need not disclose the nature of the interest but merely that you have a disclosable pecuniary interest of a sensitive nature. You must still follow (ii) and (iii) above.
	(b). <u>Other (Personal) Interests</u> Where you have a personal (i.e. other than a disclosable pecuniary) interest in any matter to be considered at this meeting then you must declare that interest no later than the commencement of the consideration of the matter in which you have that interest, or (if later) the time at which the interest becomes apparent to you. If the interest is sensitive (as agreed with the Monitoring Officer), you need not disclose the precise nature of the interest but merely declare that you have a personal interest of a sensitive nature. If the interest is such that it might reasonably be perceived as causing a conflict with discharging your duties as an Authority Member then, unless you have previously obtained a dispensation from the Authority’s Monitoring Officer, you must not seek to improperly influence any decision on the matter and as such may wish to leave the meeting while it is being considered. In any event, you must comply with any reasonable restrictions the Authority may place on your involvement with the matter in which you have the personal interest.
4.	<u>Part 2 Reports</u> Members are reminded that any Part 2 reports as circulated with the agenda for this meeting contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). Members are also reminded of the need to dispose of such reports carefully and are therefore invited to return them to the Committee Secretary at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.
5.	<u>Substitute Members (Committee Meetings only)</u> Members are reminded that, in accordance with Standing Order 35, the Clerk (or his representative) must be advised of any substitution prior to the start of the meeting. Members are also reminded that substitutions are not permitted for full Authority meetings.

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

24 March 2017

Present:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Burridge-Clayton, Chugg (Vice-Chair), Hill, Julian, Knight and Coles (sub Thomas)

* **HRMDC/20 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2016 be signed as a correct record.

* **HRMDC/21 Absence Management and Health of the Organisation**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Service Improvement – (HRMDC/17/1) that set out the performance in respect of absence management within the organisation together with an update in respect of the wider initiatives being undertaken that contributed to the health of the organisation.

The key points highlighted were that sickness absence was currently 6.36 days lost (April to December 2017) as compared with 6.61 days for the same period in 2015/16 which was a slight improvement in performance. Reference was made to the new ME app that was displayed at the meeting which would enable staff to update their personal records on the system without needing to go through the HR department.

The Head of Human Resources also drew attention to the sickness absence app which indicated that there were 79 positions showing as off sick with 77 people absent as at 24 March 2017. Of these, 20 staff were absent due to long term sickness.

In terms of benchmarking information provided by the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) for 2015-16, the position for the Service was 9.2 days absent as compared with 9.8 days for the public sector as a whole and 6.5 days for the private sector. For all organisations, the average number of days absent was 7.5 days. The Committee expressed concern that the Service was still not achieving the improvement in sickness absence that was required given that the National Office for Statistics – labour market statistics for 2016 showed a rate equivalent to 4.3 days per worker. The Head of Human Resources replied that the Service had implemented a range of measures aimed at reducing sickness absence, particularly for musculoskeletal injuries and mental health. Councillor Julian referred to work undertaken by Devon & Cornwall Police in this area to reduce sickness absence and he enquired as to whether the Service had instigated similar actions in terms of diffusing straight after difficult incidents had occurred. He also stated that the Service should ensure that its staff were physically fit. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Improvement) replied that the Service was already redesigning its operational training and that there would be more emphasis on physical fitness in the future which would include staff undertaking training on their drill nights.

It was noted that the Service had established a Working Group that was looking at the levels of fitness and whether there was any direct impact to gender and age profiles so that it was able to provide the right levels of support to its staff. The Service was also looking at its equipment to see if any redesign was necessary for health and wellbeing purposes.

The Committee enquired if there was comparable sickness absence data available from Devon & Cornwall Police so that it could benchmark against another emergency service that would have similar issues. Information was also requested on the cost of sickness absence to the Service and it was requested that this be included within future reports to the Committee. It was felt that an improvement needed to be made to the performance on sickness absence so that this culture did not continue to be replicated with future new recruits.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Service continues to progress with developing a working environment that was conducive to a high performing, motivated and healthy workforce, and
- (b) That as part of the performance measures for People and Resources, this report be noted.

* **HRMDC/22 Workforce Culture, Diversity and Inclusion**

The Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Service Improvement - (HRMD/17/2) that set out the progress that had been made by the Service in respect of changing its workforce culture, diversity and inclusive working practices, together with an outline of work that was being undertaken following receipt of the report from the Local Government Association (LGA) on “an inclusive service – the twenty-first century fire and rescue service”. Attention was drawn to the point that Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service was cited within this report as an example of good practice for its work undertaken in providing support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees through the development of the Fire Pride network.

The Committee noted that there was a significantly increased political expectation for fire & rescue services nationally with regard to workforce reform and reference was made in particular to a recent speech made by Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Policing & Fire setting this out. The Government was expecting real and purposeful change and recognised that the roles of culture and inclusion were key to making positive transformational change in the fire & rescue service. There was a number of questions posed at the back of the LGA document and it was intended that a report covering the points raised therein would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

* **HRMDC/23 Strategic Workforce Planning**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Improvement – (HRMDC/17/3) that set out the current position for wholetime staff together with the Service’s forecast for potential turnover for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

It was noted that the Service was currently 9.5 wholetime firefighters down on establishment with this forecast to be 98 by 2019/20. A campaign had been undertaken recently to recruit 16 new firefighters though. Work was also being undertaken in respect of on call firefighter recruitment and retention where the turnover was higher. A number of pilots had been undertaken, the results of which would be analysed and fed into the process for the new Integrated Risk Management Plan. Additional work was also being undertaken into what the expectations of a modern on call firefighter might be.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Service considers its Strategic Workforce Planning on a quarterly basis to facilitate the forecasting of its medium to long term staffing requirements;
- (b) That the Committee be informed and contributes to the Strategic Workforce planning process.

*NB. Minute *HRMDC/24 below also refers.*

* **HRMDC/24 Retirement & Re-employment**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Improvement – (HRMDC/17/4) that set out details of two applications that had been received for retirement and/or re-employment for approval in accordance with the Authority's Pay Policy Statement for 2017/18.

RESOLVED that the requests for retirement & re-employment as identified in paragraph 2.5 of this report be approved.

* **HRMDC/25 On Call Availability Pilots**

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Improvement – (HRMDC/17/5) that set out the position in respect of the evaluation of On Call pilots that had been running within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.

It was noted that the full evaluation of these pilots, once completed would, along with other evidence, form the basis of a business case to be developed in line with the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

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

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.25 pm

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Agenda Item 6

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/17/6
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 JUNE 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	RETIREMENT & RE-EMPLOYMENT
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the requests for retirement & re-employment as identified in paragraph 2.5 of this report be approved.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The full Authority has approved a Pay Policy Statement in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The Pay Policy Statement requires, amongst other things, for all requests for re-employment following retirement for employees up to Executive Board posts, to be approved by the Human Resources Management & Development Committee (the Committee).</p> <p>This report provides more information on the Authority's position in relation to retirement and re-employment and sets out specific requests for approval.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	<p>The Service has now achieved the planned reduction in uniformed Wholetime staff as a result of the Corporate Plan decisions in 2013/14. The Service is currently below the existing establishment level and retirement and re-employment provides us with certainty for the leave date for these employees whilst at the same time providing a suitable rate of staff turnover.</p>
EQUALITY RISK & BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	The Retirement & Re-Employment Policy has had an equalities assessment.
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Nil.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The 2016/17 Pay Policy Statement includes the following stated position on the retirement and re-employment of employees:

“8. RE-EMPLOYMENT OF EMPLOYEES

8.3 The Authority will, in principle, allow the re-employment of employees who have retired, subject to a break in service of at least one month, because it is recognised that this often represents an effective way of retaining specialist knowledge and skills without any increase in cost to the Authority (and noting that costs to the Pension Scheme are no more than would be the case for normal retirement). The re-employment of any employee who has retired will, however, be subject to:

- the approval of the Human Resources Management and Development Committee for all employees up to Executive Board posts; or*
- the approval of the full Authority for any Executive Board post-holder.*

8.4 Where retired uniformed staff are re-employed, then the Fire-Fighters’ Pension shall be abated such that the income from the gross annual rate of pay whilst re-employed together with the gross annual pension (after commutation) will not exceed the gross annual rate of pay immediately prior to retirement. For staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme, where an individual is re-employed on the same terms and conditions [salary] as previously, the same abatement rules as apply to those within the Fire Fighters Pension Scheme will be applied. However, the Authority’s policy on Pension Discretions refers to flexible retirement and states that this “may be subject to abatement during such time as the individual remains employed by the Service”. This allows the Authority to use flexible retirement opportunities where key employees may wish to continue working as they get older but step down in grade or reduce their working hours. This can be beneficial to the Authority in retaining key skills, knowledge and experience whilst also reducing costs. The authorisation of any such flexible retirement arrangements will be subject to the approval mechanism detailed above.

8.5 The appointment, or re-employment, of any members of the Executive Board (the Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services and Director of People and Commercial Services) will always be subject to approval of the full Authority and any re-employment following redundancy or retirement will be subject to consideration of a robust business case and fully scrutinised against the above criteria.”

1.2 This paper includes details of applications for retirement/re-employment in accordance with the approved policy.

2. **RETIREMENT AND RE-EMPLOYMENT**

2.1 The Service policy on retirement & re-employment is linked to workforce planning arrangements. Approval by the Authority of the 2013/14 – 2014/15 Corporate Plan at its meeting on 10 July 2013 (Minute DSFRA/20 refers) required a reduction of 149 Wholetime posts. The Service has progressed well with reducing the staffing levels against this establishment target and this has now been achieved.

- 2.2 The Service has prepared forecasts of potential Wholetime turnover in the next few years and identified that we would be significantly below the existing establishment levels. The Service has therefore in 2017 run a Wholetime recruitment campaign for 16 new recruits who will join the Service in August 2017. There will also be 11 transfers from On-call to Wholetime and 1 transfer from another Service as a result of this recruitment process. An Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is being developed which will set out our plans for the future for how we will use our resources in the most effective way and in the longer term this will contribute to determining our Workforce Plans. However, retirement and re-employment provides us with certainty for the leave date for employees whilst at the same time providing a suitable rate of staff turnover. It also provides a transition from full employment into retirement.
- 2.3 The Firefighter Pension Scheme provides for employees to receive their maximum pension benefits after 30 years' service. However, as there is no longer a fixed age for retirement it is difficult to predict precisely when individuals are likely to leave the Service. The use of retirement and re-employment opportunities encourages individuals to commit to an end retirement date, giving the Service more control over actual retirement and natural turnover. Through this process, employees have a one month break in service before returning on a fixed-term contract either on a full-time basis or as a job share. In either case, the maximum contract term that has previously been set is 12 months because of the need to reduce Wholetime Firefighter numbers. However, now that the required reduction in numbers has been achieved, consideration could be given in the future to longer periods for fixed-term contracts (for operational roles) or, in exceptional cases, permanent contracts where uniformed staff transfer to Green Book jobs. Where employees return on a job share basis, we see an immediate reduction in the workforce staffing levels.
- 2.4 For support staff, the Service has an establishment of 248 full-time equivalents with 237 in post which is a variance of -11. As part of the Service approach to Efficiency and Effectiveness we will deliver services in a way that provides best value for tax payers. We are continuing to improve the way we work which is reducing down the numbers of support staff from the 2011/12 level of 268.
- 2.5 The Service has received an expression of interest from the following uniformed and support staff employees. For the support staff post it will allow enable the Service to reduce the number of G6 Area Admin Manager posts which is consistent with other parts of the Service and provides a transition towards future admin structures. Both re-employment requests are recommended to be on a fixed-term basis.

Role	Position	Station/Dept	Interested in Job Share	Notes	Decision
Watch Manager	Academy	Organisational Assurance	No		FTC for 1 year
G6 Support Staff	Area Admin Manager	West/South Devon Groups	No	Re-employment will be part-time Finance Admin at G4	FTC for 1 year

- 2.6 There are no additional financial costs for the organisation since these employees have reached the point at which they can retire and are therefore entitled to receive their pension lump sum on retirement. The pension payments would normally be abated if re-employed. In addition to giving certainty as to a leaving date, the retirement and re-employments represent a saving to both the Service and employee as pension contributions are either:

- removed as the employee opts out of future pension contributions: or

- they are reduced since staff from Firefighter to Watch Manager, who decide to join a pension scheme, will be in the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme for which the employer contributions are lower than the previous 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

2.7 For positions at Station Manager or above, the employee would be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme which again has lower employer contribution levels. Where uniformed staff move from uniformed positions to support staff positions, they will again be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

GLENN ASKEW
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item 7

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/17/7
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 JUNE 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	APPOINTMENTS TO THE INTERNAL DISPUTES RESOLUTION PANEL
LEAD OFFICER	Clerk to the Authority
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>To appoint from amongst the Committee Members a Panel of three Members with delegated authority to consider and determine complaints made by individuals under Stage 2 of the Firefighters' Pensions Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure"</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) enables complaints related to a pension to be considered by the Service and Authority under a two stage process as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stage One: the matters should be considered by the Chief Fire Officer, or a senior manager specified by him, who will give a decision in the matters; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stage Two: the decision should be confirmed or replaced by the decision of elected Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority which may in turn delegate this function to a smaller grouping.</p> <p>It should be noted that the Service procedures for grievances, discipline or dismissals now align with ACAS practice and guidance (which replaced the statutory discipline regulations) and do not provide for any ultimate recourse to the Authority. The Service has no intention to change this arrangement but, given the revised Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure are linked to statutory pensions schemes, it is necessary in the case of pensions complaints to provide an ultimate recourse to the Authority.</p> <p>This matter has been delegated by the Authority to this Committee for determination (Minute DSFRA/10 refers). The Committee is requested, therefore, to appoint three of its Members to serve on the IDRP Panel.</p> <p>In 2016/17, the Membership of the Panel was Councillors Bown, Burridge-Clayton and Knight. Councillor Knight is no longer a member of the Fire & Rescue Authority and, given the need for Panel Members to have some experience in this area, it is suggested that it would be appropriate for the current Members who have already built up some experience to continue to serve on this ad hoc Panel and that an additional member be appointed to fill the vacancy left by Councillor Knight.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	An initial assessment has revealed no equality issues in this matter sufficient to warrant a full equality impact assessment.

EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	Nil.
APPENDICES	None.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Firefighters' Pensions Scheme Circular 1/2009 – Firefighters' Pension Scheme: Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP).

Agenda Item 8

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/17/8
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 JUNE 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	ABSENCE MANAGEMENT & HEALTH OF THE ORGANISATION
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>(a) <i>That the Service continues to progress with developing a working environment that is conducive to a high-performing, motivated and healthy workforce;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>That the Service completes the new absence management policy and introduces the policy and guidance with a communications and training plan; and</i></p> <p>(c) <i>Subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service takes seriously the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and as such, it provides a wide range of initiatives, interventions and policies to ensure that employees enjoy a safe and supportive working environment.</p> <p>The Service performance for Absence Management has been included as a standing item on the Human Resources Management and Development Committee (the Committee) agenda since the formation of the Service. Absence levels are a key measure as they affect the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Service. During discussions at recent committee meetings, there has been a desire to broaden the considerations to the 'Health of the Organisation'.</p> <p>The 'Health of the Organisation' relates to the wider health of the organisation as a means of monitoring people aspects which could be inextricably linked. The health of the organisation encompasses the wider health, fitness and wellbeing within the organisation. The key aspects of consideration in this report are the financial year end sickness reports and the Service action plan.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Staffing time associated with monitoring and managing sickness as well as developing improvements to our recording and measuring systems.
EQUALITY RISK AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	The current Absence Management policy has had an equality impact assessment and a further ERBA will be required for a new Sickness Absence Management policy that is in development.
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Action Plan
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

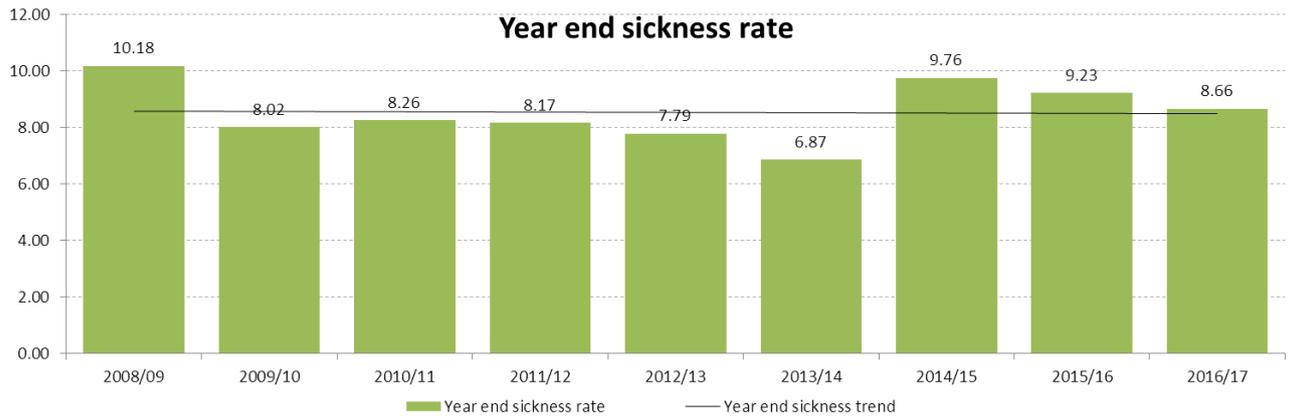
1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service takes seriously the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and provides a wide range of initiatives, interventions and policies to ensure that employees enjoy a safe and supportive working environment. However, the Service recognises that employee absence has a significant cost to the organisation and is therefore something that needs to be measured, understood and addressed.
- 1.2 The Service performance for Absence Management has been included as a standing item on the Committee agenda since the formation of the combined Service in 2007. Absence levels are a key measure as they affect the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Service. During discussions at recent Committee meetings, there has been a desire to broaden the considerations to the 'Health of the Organisation'.
- 1.3 The 'Health of the Organisation' relates to the wider health of the organisation as a means of monitoring people aspects which could be inextricably linked. The health of the organisation encompasses the wider health, fitness and wellbeing within the organisation.
- 1.4 The key aspects of consideration in this report are the financial year end sickness statistics and the Service action plan. The report to the next meeting of this Committee will include the associated measures e.g. ill-health retirements, the number of discipline and grievances cases, staff turnover rates and the number of mediation cases.
- 1.5 In terms of reporting of sickness, we now have the Sickness Dashboard which reports on the number of staff who are off at any one time rather than the average sickness rates. It also distinguishes any lost time as a result of workplace injuries. The data is available in real-time. The next stage of this tool will be to develop further functionality around the provision of sickness absence data. This method of presenting the sickness data was developed following feedback from the Committee at previous meetings.
- 1.6 At the previous meeting of the Committee in March 2017, it was requested that information be provided on the cost of sickness and the Service will be in a position to provide this information at the meeting. Data comparisons with Devon & Cornwall Police have also been requested by the Committee and Officers are seeking to obtain this information.

2. **2016/17 ABSENCE PERFORMANCE**

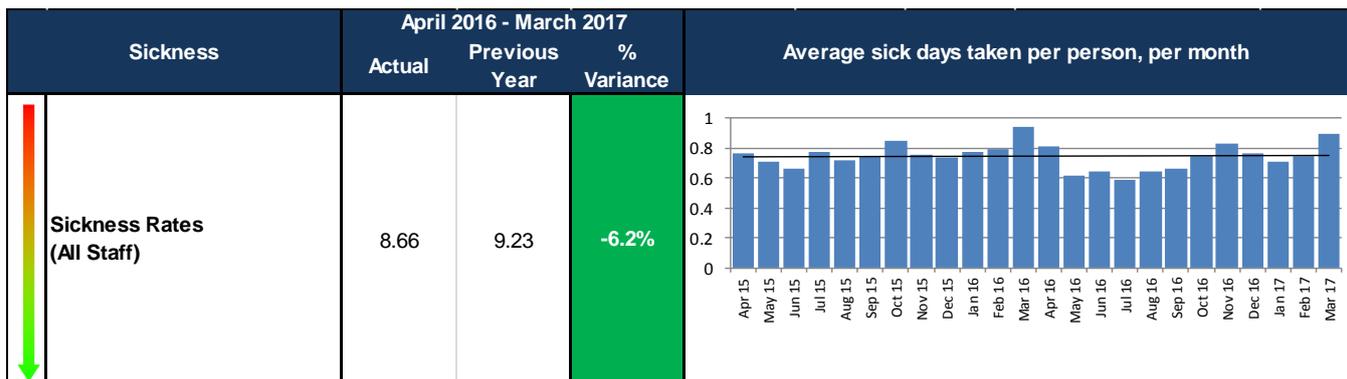
- 2.1 Absence levels since 2008/9 are shown below in terms of average lost days per person per year. This shows the improvement during the last financial year and that at the year end we had continued to show an improvement over the previous two years.

Sickness Levels since the formation of DSFRS



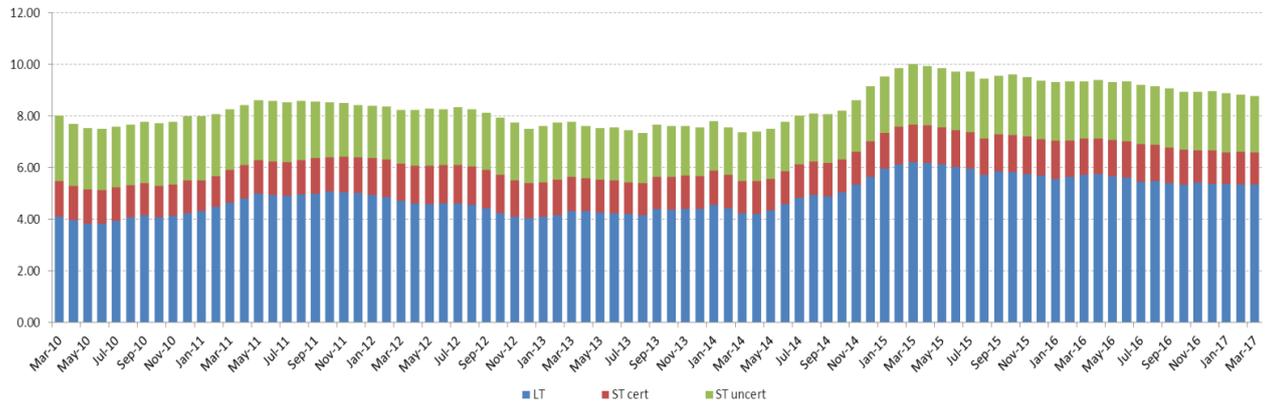
- 2.2 The graph below shows the monthly sickness rates for the last 2 years. On average, employees have taken 8.66 days of sick leave in the last financial year compared with 9.23 for the previous year. Since reporting at the last HRMD Committee meeting for the performance at the end of Q3, the variance on the previous year has improved from -3.7% to -6.2% which is good news.

Sickness Direction of Travel



- 2.3 With monthly peaks and troughs in sickness, it is difficult to see the on-going longer term change in the rates over this time. The bar chart below shows the 12-month rolling sickness rate as measured at the end of each month. As this is a rolling rate it removes any monthly peaks and troughs and enables us to see performance trends more clearly.
- 2.4 There are 3 categories of sickness shown in the chart:
- Self-certified sickness – periods of sickness up to 7 days which do not require a GP medical certificate
 - Short-term sickness – periods of sickness between 8 and 28 days for which a GP certificate is required
 - Long-term sickness – periods of over 28 days
- 2.5 The Committee has received previous reports regarding the peak (as illustrated in the chart) that occurred in long-term sickness from May 2014 until August 2015.

Average sick days taken per person, per year on a rolling 12 month basis



2.6 We can then consider the breakdown of sickness rates between the different contract types as well as the length of sickness. There are 4 contract types that we consider:

- Wholetime Station based staff
- Wholetime non-Station based staff
- Control Staff
- Support Staff

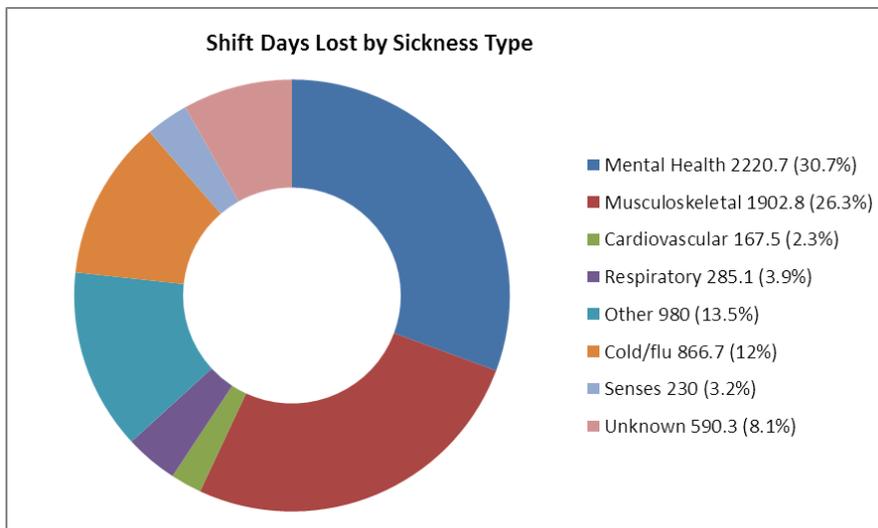
Sickness Rates by Post Type

Sickness Rates by post type April 2016 - March 2017		Wholetime Station based staff			Wholetime Non Station staff (inc SHQ, STC, group support teams etc)		
		Actual	Previous Year	% Variance	Actual	Previous Year	% Variance
	Overall Sickness Rate	7.35	7.94	-7.4%	10.01	11.18	-10.4%
	Total # Days/shifts lost	2739.5	3118.5	-12.2%	1912	2210	-13.5%
	Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)	3.86	4.52	-14.6%	8.17	8.43	-3.1%
	# Days/shifts lost LT	1438.5	1776.5	-19.0%	1560	1667	-6.4%
	Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)	1.11	1.08	2.7%	0.80	1.53	-47.7%
	# Days/shifts lost STcert	414	425	-2.6%	153	303	-49.5%
	Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calendar days)	2.38	2.33	2.0%	1.04	1.21	-14.1%
# Days/shifts lost STuncert	887	917	-3.3%	199	240	-17.1%	
Sickness Rates by post type April 2016 - March 2017		Control			Support staff		
		Actual	Previous Year	% Variance	Actual	Previous Year	% Variance
	Overall Sickness Rate	10.10	14.10	-28.3%	9.41	8.52	10.5%
	Total # Days/shifts lost	367.96	568	-35.2%	2223.58	2079.96	6.9%
	Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)	4.78	7.47	-36.1%	5.31	4.59	15.7%
	# Days/shifts lost LT	173.96	301	-42.2%	1254.4	1120.95	11.9%
	Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)	1.13	2.66	-57.6%	1.72	1.57	10.0%
	# Days/shifts lost STcert	41	107	-61.7%	406.69	382.3	6.4%
	Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calendar days)	4.20	3.97	5.8%	2.38	2.36	0.8%
# Days/shifts lost STuncert	153	160	-4.4%	562.49	576.71	-2.5%	

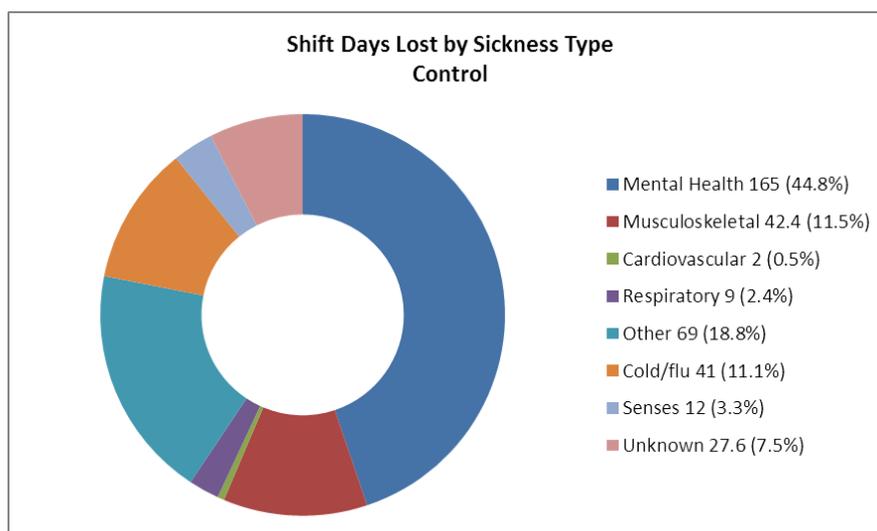
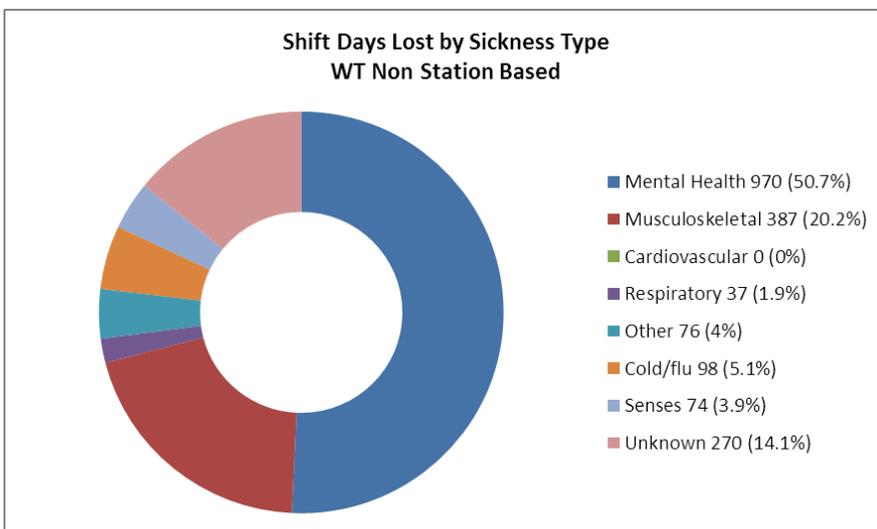
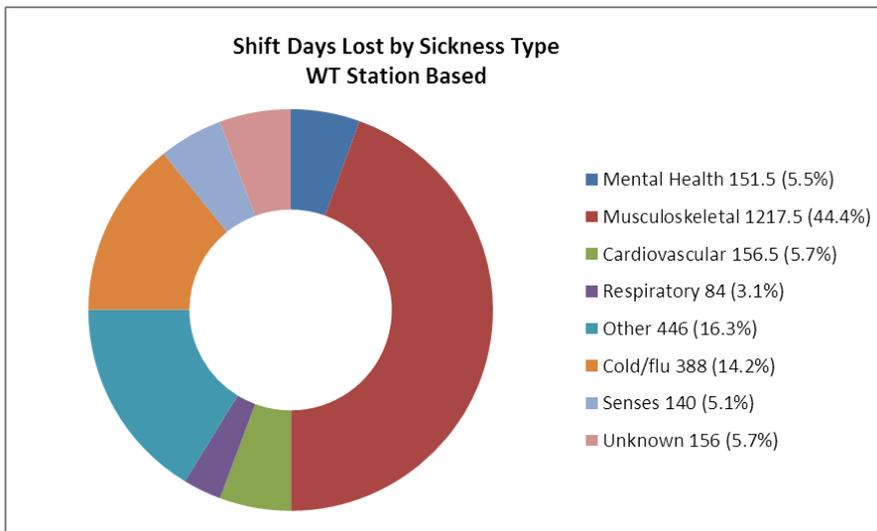
- 2.7 Within Wholetime, long-term sickness has improved compared with the previous year with both short-term sickness and uncertified sickness remaining static.
- 2.8 Within Control, the overall sickness level has improved significantly from an average of 14 days per person to 10 days.
- 2.9 Support staff have seen an overall increase particularly around long term sickness.
- 2.10 Wholetime Non-station based staff has also seen an overall improvement.
- 2.11 In terms of considering the reasons for sickness, this information is included in the sickness dashboard and has been included in this report and presented using the same doughnut pie chart format. Again, these are shown for the 4 categories of staff referred to above.
- 2.12 The two highest reasons for sickness amongst all staff are mental health and musculoskeletal and this reflects the national position. However, when we consider Wholetime Firefighters it is notable that the levels of sickness attributable to mental health are much lower than the levels reported by other Services where the average is 19% compared with 5.5% within DSFRS. From these charts, it is clear that we need to place a focus on preventing and supporting staff with mental health and musculoskeletal issues.

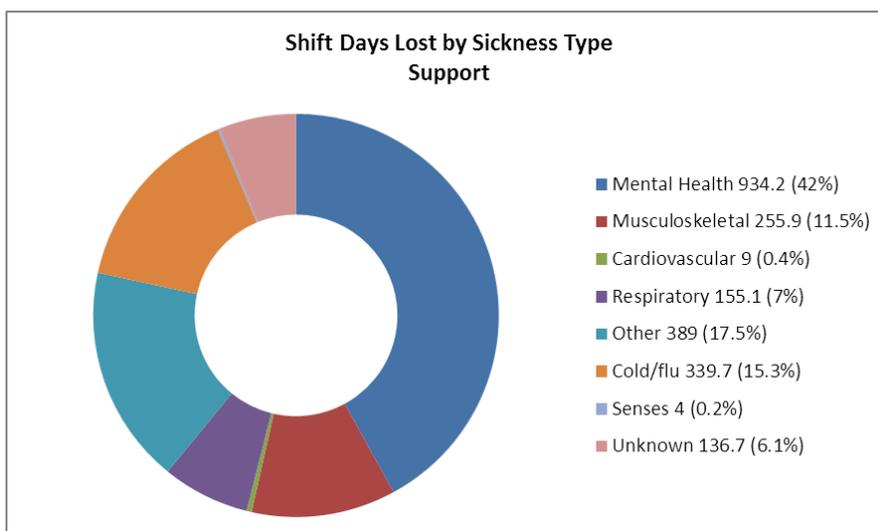
Reasons for sickness for each staff category

Shift days lost by sickness type (all):



Shift days lost by sickness type (split by post type):





3. **BENCHMARKING**

3.1 As part of our benchmarking, we compare ourselves with other Fire & Rescue Services and we have participated in the national Fire & Rescue Service Occupational Health Performance Report. This report references data from 36 other Fire & Rescue Services who will determine their own arrangements for publishing their data. This data for 2016-17 is produced for the Committee in Part 2 of this agenda for information. When considering the data for Wholetime, Control and Support Staff, the Service has performed better than the other South West Fire & Rescue Services participating in the report but is still in twenty second place which is a position that it wants to improve upon. The Service has had discussions with the top performing services for this measure and discussions have taken place with them to identify what steps they have taken.

3.2 The top performing Services have had a range of initiatives that have been developed through a Sickness Working Group. Their initiatives have included:

- Provision of sickness statistics;
- Using an existing Firefighter within fitness qualifications as a movement specialist to provide advice to staff;
- Station league tables for short-term sickness which is on a poster across the Service;
- Shortening their policy, creating guidance notes for managers;
- Modifying their trigger points which previously operated other a 3 month period to 12 months;
- Incorporating absence management training into their core skills training;
- Promoting health campaigns with email tag lines;
- Offering business healthcare and an Employee Assistance Programme;
- Promoting the support that is provided from the Firefighters' Charity;
- Modifying the Occupational Health sign-back to work;
- Having a dedicated HR Officer as a sickness case manager who supported line managers with dealing with sickness; and
- Enabling managers to have direct contact with Occupational Health before an employee attends to explain the reason for referral.

4. ACTION PLAN ACTIVITY

4.1 There are tips that Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service can take from the top performing Service from the benchmark data and an action plan is currently being progressed. This is set out in Appendix A of this report. The key areas of focus within the Service action plan are as follows:

- The provision of more timely and accurate information to managers;
- Leadership – making the link between sickness and performance, with managers taking a more active role in the management of individual sickness and in managing workloads and priorities;
- An appropriate blend of robust decisions, taken at an earlier stage, in relation to long-term sickness and appropriate preventative measures to prevent sickness; and
- The development and promotion of a health, fitness and wellbeing culture.

4.2 These key areas of focus have been developed across several action plan categories which are described in the Action Plan as Measuring and monitoring absence levels, Analysis of absence management data, Cultural aspects, Communications, Sick pay & overtime arrangements, Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives and Training.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides the current Absence performance management data and our progress towards our action plan. The year end performance has been an improvement on the previous two years and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is the best performer in the South West. The Service is not complacent, however, and is taking steps as part of an action plan to improve our performance.

GLENN ASKEW
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

ACTION PLAN (NB. colours are to assist with showing the action categories)

Category	Action	Status	Comments
Measuring and monitoring absence levels	Complete the testing and implementation of version 2 of the Sickness Portal.	Completed	The sickness portal system was upgraded and data cleansing
Measuring and monitoring absence levels	Determine the next system development requirements to incorporate accessibility externally for on-call staff, link with the Gartan system and the automatic sign-off of Return-to-work interview forms within 3 days.	Completed	A new sickness reporting tool within the Workbench was created. There is also a sickness dashboard which was developed with input from the HRMD committee
Measuring and monitoring absence levels	Provision of Long-term sickness data to all SLT leads on a monthly basis.	Completed	These are provided on a monthly basis.
Analysis of absence management data	Undertaking further analysis of absence management data in relation to long-term sickness duration and reason codes, sickness league tables, local level data, and hot-spots eg where there has been significant uncertainty or organisational change.	Partially Completed	Previously reports have been produced by Analysts. We could do further work on the impact on Long Term Sickness of removing the sickness panel and also sickness patterns but this would require an additional temporary position and the cost/benefit would need to be considered.

Analysis of absence management data	Benchmarking of sickness data with the National FRS Occupational Health Performance Report, National Office of Statistics and CIPD surveys.	Completed	This is done within the fire sector on a quarterly basis and annually with the CIPD survey. The NOS reports are also reporting in lost days rather than a percentage and so this benchmark can be used.
Analysis of absence management data	At a local level, line mgrs review sickness patterns related to weekends, start/finish of shifts, good weather, sporting events etc	Ongoing	Locally, managers are responsible for identifying any patterns. In Control an in-depth analysis was undertaken.
Cultural aspects	Introduction of an Organisational Development Strategy	In progress	The OD strategy is being developed under the Transformation directorate.
Cultural aspects	Introduce the new survey featuring engagement and job satisfaction.	Completed	A service wide survey was undertaken in 2015 using 9 questions focused on aspects identified as key indicators of organisational satisfaction. Free text responses were also provided. Staff surveys are undertaken on a 2 yearly basis.
Cultural aspects	Develop a further mini-survey on staff attitudes to booking sickness and that of colleagues taking time off.	Not started	No further mini-surveys have been undertaken.
Cultural aspects	Create a fitness culture through the implementation of the Firefighter Fitness project.	In progress	A vocational fitness trial is being undertaken in 2017/18.
Cultural aspects	Provide Performance information within PIMS on the status of attendance at Fitness tests/3 yearly medical	Not started	The fitness test has been separated from the 3 yearly medical and with the move to the vocational fitness trial, this has not been progressed.

Cultural aspects	Provide SLT with annual listings of Fitness tests/3 yearly medicals that require scheduling.	Not started	The fitness test has been separated from the 3 yearly medical and with the move to the vocational fitness trial, this has not been progressed.
Communications	Regular communication messages from the CFO including the impact upon the Service.	Ongoing	Alert messages have been used and there has been briefings within the Focus Point
Communications	Advertise to staff the other forms of discretionary leave that can be taken and also family leave.	Completed	This has been communicated to staff.
Sick pay & overtime arrangements	Remove the sickness review panel.	Completed	This change was discussed collectively with TUs introduced in Sept 2015.
Sick pay & overtime arrangements	Review the Sickness Absence Management policy and update with the changes relating to the action plan.	In progress	There has been a considerable amount of time invested in a new policy document and guidance document through collective discussions with the TUs and this is nearing completion.
Sick pay & overtime arrangements	Factor attendance records into the granting of overtime and review whether support staff increments should be linked to satisfactory attendance and performance.	Ongoing	Locally managers are responsible for reviewing overtime. Support staff increments within our grading structure agreement are not linked to performance as per the national agreement.
Sick pay & overtime arrangements	Remove sick pay where staff have not provided the appropriate fit note or declined to attend a medical.	Completed	No further explanation is required
Sick pay & overtime arrangements	Introduce charging for staff that decline to attend medicals and do not inform OH or the Service.	Completed	No further explanation is required

Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Introduce a Total Rewards employee benefits package.	Stopped	Insufficient capacity with the reduction in HR staffing
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Review the Occupational Health working arrangements to ensure that we are get the expected Service levels and that the additional services of physio and counselling are providing a return on investment. Use review points within the provision of Physio and counselling.	Ongoing	Regular meetings with OH supplier and a procurement process underway to select suppliers from November 2017.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Make early contact with the employee within 3 days to understand the reason for the absence and consider pathways to returning to work eg a phased return or workplace adjustments and if appropriate meet the employee within 7 days.	Ongoing	Incorporated into the policy and sickness reporting tool.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Pledge our Support to the Blue Light, Time to Change campaign.	In progress	Pledge completed along with a specific action plan for supporting mental health. Includes actions relating to top level buy in, internal communications, reviewing policy & process, creating space for people with lived experiences to share their stories, promoting key dates in the mental health calendar & training staff.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Utilise Blue Light resources including mental health training packages.	In progress	Line manager undertaken with variable take up. Recommend that offered to all staff.

Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Explore the potential benefits of promoting and supporting the government Fit for Work scheme.	Completed	Incorporated into policy and actions from HR.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Create a more stable workplace by reducing the number of temporary promotions.	Ongoing	Promotional processes have been introduced to enable staff to, where possible, be promoted on a substantive basis.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	As part of our Performance Management, ensure that our staff fully understand what is required from them so that in a shrinking organisation we clarify the priorities and ensure that this is the focus of our efforts. The use of appraisals (PPDs) and regular 1:1s with line managers will support this.	In progress	Further work being prepared to review the appraisal process supported by an external Learning & Development organisation.
Supportive health and wellbeing initiatives	Promote a self-funded healthcare scheme.	Not started	As an alternative, assistance provided on a case by case basis where NHS waiting times will delay recovery.
Training	Update the sickness management e-learning package and make mandatory for managers.	In progress	Training provided as part of management development. An e-learning mental health training package has been in development but is not yet finished.

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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