

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

3 July 2018

Present:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Clayton, Peart, Vijeh (Vice-Chair) and Randall Johnson (vice Thomas)

* **HRMDC/1** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings held on 12 December 2017 and 23 March 2018 be signed as a correct record.

* **HRMDC/2** **Absence Management Performance Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/23) that set out the Service's performance in relation to absence management.

It was noted that performance in 2017/18 was 8.51 days/shifts of sickness as compared with 8.68 days in 2016/17 which showed a slight improvement. In terms of the sickness rates by post types, absence for wholetime, control and support staff was higher in 2017/18 at 8.95, 10.80 and 9.42 days respectively. Wholetime non-station based staff had improved with performance at 6.33 days lost as opposed to 9.95 in 2016/17. The most common causes of sickness absence across all staff groups were mental health (30.6%) and musculoskeletal (31.4%).

A top level review of absence management had been undertaken and a new sickness absence policy together with three mini guides had been instigated which had been written with input from the Representative Bodies. The policy was aimed at promoting the health safety and wellbeing of staff and would also support managers in dealing fairly, consistently and constructively with attendance issues.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Service continues with the actions set out in the top level review of sickness absence as reported in a separate paper to the Committee (HRMDC/18/24).

* **HRMDC/3** **Sickness Absence Management**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/24) that set out details of the high level review of sickness absence using trend analysis and from a policy, process and cultural perspective. The data was analysed from the perspective of:

- trends in data over 2,3, 5 and 10 years,
- comparison of long term, short term and short term (uncertified) absence, and
- the main causes of absence.

In terms of data analysis, the key observations noted, amongst others, were:

- Total sick days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) had a downward trend for the 2, 3 and 10 year period but an upward trend for the 5 year period;

- Long term sickness (over 28 days) had an upward trend for 2 , 5 and 10 year periods but a downward trend for the 3 year period;
- The majority of short term certified and short term uncertified absence had a downward trend;
- There had been a significant upward trend in the rate of staff being absent for mental health reasons over the last 10 years;
- For 62.1% of all sickness reported, there had been no previous episodes reported.

It was noted that sickness absence was estimated to have cost the Service around £11.6m over the last 10 years. Cleveland Fire Brigade prepared a quarterly occupational health performance report that collated information from English fire and rescue services. The most recent report covered the period April to December 2017 and this showed that Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service was recording a sickness rate just under the national average for wholetime firefighters but was higher than national for Fire Control staff. For support staff, the Service was recording just at the national average.

The analysis of sickness absence and the associated management procedures had enabled a rigorous review of performance in this area and set out issues for consideration in the future. A number of actions had been agreed to support improvement as set out within paragraph 6.3 of the report.

HRMDC/4 Pension Discretions - Firefighters' Pension Scheme

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance (Treasurer) that set out two proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes in terms of:

- The upper age limit for Injury Retirement medical reviews, and;
- The payment of employees' pension tax liability through a "Voluntary Scheme Pays" arrangement.

RESOLVED that the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority be recommended to approve the following changes to the Authority's Pensions Discretions Policy:

- (a) that the upper age limit for Injury Retirements medical reviews are aligned to that of Ill-health Retirements as set out in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 of report HRMDC/18/25;
- (b) that a Voluntary Scheme Pays arrangement is introduced for the payment of pension Annual Allowance tax liabilities, but applicable only in one (or both) of those circumstances as identified in paragraph 3.11 of report HRMDC/18/25.

*** HRMDC/5 Review of Expenses Policy - Accommodation & Subsistence**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/26) that provided information on the review of the Expenses Policy. It was noted that the element relating to mileage expenses had already been considered and this report set out proposals for the review of overnight accommodation rates together with subsistence.

RESOLVED

- (a) That, subject to the Service consulting with the recognised Trade Unions, the Committee approves:
 - (i) The changes to the rate of overnight accommodation (outside of London) as set out within paragraph 2.2 of report HRMDC/18/26; and
 - (ii) The changes to the rates of subsistence as set out within paragraph 3.3 of report HRMDC/18/26;
- (b) That the impact on the rates of subsistence and overnight accommodation included within the Scheme of Allowances for the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority be noted.

* **HRMDC/6 Appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (Clerk) (HRMDC/18/27) that set out the requirement for the Committee to appoint a Panel of three of its members with delegated authority to consider and determine complaints made by individuals under stage 2 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure.

It was noted that the previous representation had been Councillors Bown, Clayton and Hannaford.

RESOLVED that Councillors Bown, Clayton and Hannaford (with Vjeh as a substitute) be appointed to serve as members of the Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure (IDRP) Panel until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in May 2019.

* **HRMDC/7 Workforce Culture, Diversity & Inclusion update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/28) that set out the progress made to date by the Service on the planning and delivery of cultural change within the organisation as driven by the Integrated Risk Management Plan, Fire & Rescue Plan and the new National Framework.

Reference was made to the establishment of a Fire Standards Board, the aim of which was to ensure standards were co-ordinated nationally and to a high level across the sector. This was a key element of the Government's fire reform agenda which aimed to improve the professionalism, effectiveness and accountability of fire and rescue services.

The report also referred to work that was being undertaken in respect of:

- Inclusive culture/leadership – the new Service Values had been introduced and work on the appraisal process continued to be developed , and;
- Recruitment, promotion and retention activities.

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

