

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

25 January 2023

Present:

Councillors Hannaford (Chair), Best, Kendall, Peart, Randall Johnson (vice Clayton), Thomas and Trail BEM.

Apologies:

Councillor Clayton.

* **PC/22/12** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2022 be signed as a correct record.

* **PC/22/13** **Performance Monitoring Report 2022- 23: Quarter 3**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Finance, People & Estates (PC/23/1) detailing performance as at Quarter 3 of 2022-23 against those Key Performance Indicators agreed by the Committee for measuring progress against the following three strategic priorities as approved by the Authority:

- 3(a). Ensure that the workforce is highly trained and has the capability and capacity to deliver services professionally, safely and effectively;
- 3(b). Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, promoting inclusion and developing strong and effective leaders who ensure that we have a fair place to work where our organisational values are a lived experience; and
- 3(c). Recognise and maximise the value of all employees, particularly the commitment of on-call firefighters, improving recruitment and retention.

In particular, the report provided information on performance against each of the following key measures:

- operational core competence skills (breathing apparatus; incident command; water rescue; safety when working at heights or in confined spaces; maritime; driving; and casualty care);
- health and safety (accidents [including near misses]; personal injuries; vehicle incidents; and reporting against the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR));

- sickness and absence (including mental health) for wholetime, on-call, support, Control and casual staff, by type of sickness and details of the health and wellbeing support offered by the Service. The report also provided comparisons with national fire service data and featured benchmarking for sickness absence against comparable, neighbouring fire and rescue services;
- fitness testing (including support offered for red and amber groups) and a review of testing to explore a more inclusive, role-related functional fitness test for operational staff;
- diversity, with a particular emphasis on the work being undertaken on retention and promoting inclusion by developing strong leadership living the Service's values ;
- promoting inclusion, developing strong leaders, living Service values and being a fair place to work;
- grievance, capability and disciplinary issues;
- strategic workforce planning including details of staff turnover in all categories of the workforce; and
- employee engagement.

The Committee welcomed the new RAG rating on operational core competence which it found increased its understanding of the performance in this area. Reference was made to the position in respect of vehicle accidents and near misses both of which had reduced in quarter 3 of 2022-23. It was noted that there was a correlation between the number of incidents attended and the overall reductions in vehicle accidents, largely as a result of the covid pandemic. The number of incidents attended would be added in to this paper in future to show this correlation.

The Committee expressed concern in respect of the average number of days/shifts lost due to sickness absence which had increased to 6.73 days/shifts lost per person for the period April to November 2022 as compared with 5.90 days/shifts lost for the same period in 2022. The Co-Head of Human Resources advised the Committee that this was still due to Covid related illness which was no longer a separate category but was included within the general cold/flu category which had, for the first time, overtaken mental health issues as the primary cause of sickness in Quarter 3 of 2022-23. Health and wellbeing support continued to be the focus for the Service in getting staff back to work. It was suggested that a trend line be added to the report in future as sickness absence seemed to be increasing and needed to be monitored carefully.

It was noted that the retention of women in the Service seemed to have improved which was positive news although women continued to be underrepresented within the Service as a whole. Reference was also made to the issue of promoting inclusion and ensuring that all staff felt empowered to report any incidence of noncompliance with Service Values in order to improve the organisational culture.

(See also Minute *PC/22/14 below).

* **PC/22/14 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Action Plan Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (PC/23/2) outlining progress to date against the Action Plans developed to address both the Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement identified following the most recent Service inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The Cause for Concern Action Plan had been submitted to HMICFRS by the deadline of 31 August 2022. Four of the actions within the Cause for Concern Action Plan were recorded currently as "In Progress – Off Track" due to:

- 01a.01: As at 16/01/2023, completion of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) eLearning across the Service is 90% (1998 of 2223 members of staff). A target of 95% compliance for the wholetime workforce had been set. A target for the on-call workforce is to be determined;
- 01a.08/ 01b.01: The Head of Communications had designed the core brief, which will now be presented to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) for approval; and
- 01b.04: The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) was currently in discussion with the CFO and Director of Finance, People and Estates on what the Service can and cannot publish from a legal perspective. Once this was established, the appropriate data will be made available to the workforce.

Delivery of the Areas for Improvement Action Plan was on track overall.

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