

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

10 December 2018

Present:-

Councillors Best, Clayton, Coles (vice Bown), Peart, Thomas, and Vijeh (Vice-Chair - in the Chair)

Apologies:-

Councillor Hannaford

Also in attendance (in accordance with Standing Order 38):-

Councillor Randall Johnson

* **HRMDC/13 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2018 be signed as a correct record, subject to amendment of the attendance list to record "(Vice Thomas)" after Councillor Randall Johnson (who was substituting at the meeting for Councillor Thomas).

* **HRMDC/14 Absence Management Performance Report**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/33) that set out the Service's performance in relation to absence management for the period April to October 2018.

The report highlighted that absence for all employees for the period April to October 2018 was an average of 4.53 days compared with 4.92 days for the same period in 2017/18 which represented an 8% improvement. This was broken down in the report into more detail for the following staff categories:

- Wholetime station based staff – 5.57 days lost compared to 4.55 in 2017/18;
- Wholetime non-station based staff – 2.71 days lost compared with 4.35 in 2017/18;
- Control staff – 5.13 days lost compared with 8.78 days in 2017/18;
- Support staff – 4.29 days lost compared with 5.42 in 2017/18; and
- On Call - this could be compared with the previous year now the data was held which showed an absence of 6.61 days lost as compared with 6.65 days for the same period in 2017/18.

Reference was made to the ongoing work being undertaken by the Service to improve sickness absence. It was noted that a new Sickness Absence Policy had been finalised now. This included the provision of quick step guides for both staff and line managers. The policy also recognised that early intervention was often most effective.

As part of its support for a healthier workforce, the Committee noted that the Service had offered corporate flu vaccinations but the take up to date had been only 250 e-vouchers issued. Councillor Vijeh commented that the Service needed to understand why the flu jab was not being taken up. Councillor Vijeh also commented on the importance of early intervention in managing sickness absence and asked for information on this matter to be submitted to a future meeting.

Following a discussion in respect of the Service's proposals for fitness testing in the future, the Committee enquired if this would be undertaken in accordance with national procedures. The Head of Human Resources replied that the Service had been at the forefront of national research that had been undertaken into fitness. The 12 month pilot that the Service had undertaken in respect of the Drill Ground Test had provided far more extensive data than the original national research undertaken by Bath University. The Committee further enquired if the Service was adhering to national standards in respect of the VO² level set for fitness testing. The Human Resources Manager replied that the level set nationally was 42 VO² max which the Service had adopted, although there was also national guidance which indicated that staff could remain operational if they reached a level of 36 VO² max.

* **HRMDC/15** **Workforce Culture, Diversity & Inclusion Quarterly Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/18/34) that set out the progress made in respect of work being undertaken by the Service in planning and delivering cultural change in support of the requirements of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan, the Fire and Rescue Plan and national guidance.

The Committee noted the following points in particular:

- That the Chief Fire Officer had taken up the lead role within the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) for Diversity & Inclusion and he would be progressing this agenda both nationally and locally;
- A new People Strategy had been prepared and was out for consultation with staff currently and a Diversity & inclusion Plan had been implemented;
- A cultural survey had been commenced which was intended to provide a gap analysis to assist the Service in determining what actions should be considered to ensure the Service's culture was inclusive and relevant to achieve its objectives;
- A diagnosis of recruitment practices had been started to allow identification of interventions which should lead to good practice being shared and implemented more consistently across the Service.

Reference was made in particular to the recruitment of Firefighters and the point that the Service had commenced using the Apprenticeship Scheme for the Wholetime new recruits who joined the Service in 2017 and also that the Scheme was being trialled with 5 On-call Firefighters. The Director of Service Improvement advised the Committee that the establishment of the apprenticeships within Devon & Somerset had been a significant piece of work which should be commended, particularly in view of this point that the Service was leading the way with On-call apprenticeships. It was hoped that the On-call apprenticeships could be extended within the Service in due course.

HRMDC/16 Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2019/20

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (HRMDC/18/35) to which was attached the proposed Pay Policy Statement to operate for the Authority for the forthcoming (2019-20) financial year. The Localism Act 2011 required such a Statement, setting out the Authority's policy towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce (particularly the relationship between the pay of senior staff and the lowest paid employees), to be approved prior to the commencement of each financial year and published, as a minimum, on the Authority's website.

The report identified that the principal differences between the proposed iteration and the previous version of the Pay Policy Statement related to the application of nationally agreed cost of living pay awards and a minor revision to the controls relating to the re-employment of employees who had retired, which reflected the provisions within the Fire & Rescue Service National Framework for England.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement for 2019-20 be recommended to the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority for approval.

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

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.57 am