

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

10 July 2019

Present:-

Councillors Clayton, Hannaford (Chair), Peart, Thomas, Wheeler and Vjeh (Vice-Chair)

In attendance (in accordance with Standing Order 38(1))

Councillor Randall Johnson

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

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2019 be signed as a correct record.

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

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/6) that set out the Service's performance in relation to absence management for both the year 2018/19 and also for the months of April and May 2019.

It was noted that, in 2018/19 and for the fourth consecutive year, the Service's performance on absence management had improved to 7.68 days/shift lost as compared to the target of 8 days/shifts lost. This also compared well to the public sector average target which was 8.4 days/shifts lost. In April and May 2019, the performance was 1.14 days/shifts lost per person which was slightly worse than the same period in 2018/19 although it was recognised that this was a very early point in the year.

Reference was made to the point that absence for On Call staff seemed to be higher than in other staff categories. The Head of Human Resources replied that this was largely because On Call staff worked 7 days and therefore the chance of days being lost due to sickness was higher. It was noted at this point that long term sickness was the area of focus for the Service and that the highest reason for absence was still musculoskeletal at 42% for all categories of staff.

Councillor Hannaford stated that, for corporate responsibility, the Committee needed to understand all of the issues to be assured that the right processes were in place for the organisation. The Head of Human Resources advised that there was a Health and Safety Steering Committee in place with representatives from both the Service and Representative Bodies that looked in detail at sickness absence and the reasons behind this. He added that it would be feasible to submit a report on health and safety to the Committee which would assist in bringing the wider statistics forward. Councillor Vjeh referred to the cost of absence and suggested that there should be measures in place to ensure that information presented was useful. The Head of Human Resources replied that there was insufficient information available currently to put a target into place.

The Director of Service Improvement advised that there was a need to consider in more depth what was required for On Call staff in future. He added that, in terms of sickness absence, it may be that staff would continue with their primary employment but book off sick with the Service.

Councillor Hannafod requested more detailed information to be submitted to the Committee in respect of On Call sickness absence and he asked that a briefing be submitted to the next meeting covering this, together with the reasons behind musculoskeletal and mental health absence in greater depth.

* **HRMDC/3 Workforce Culture, Diversity & Inclusion**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/19/7) that set out the progress made in the first quarter of 2019-20 towards achieving a more diverse workforce and a more inclusive working environment.

The Committee noted the following points in terms of:

Inclusive culture/leadership:

- The new appraisals process was being trialled within selected groups of staff with the accompanying IT system covering “conversations”. Full implementation was expected by the end of July 2019;
- A People Strategy had been published and there was a need to have a communications plan in place now;
- An Inclusion Think Tank had been exploring national recommendations around diversity and inclusion in the sector and a draft strategy had been put forward to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) for consideration under its people strand;
- The Service had achieved Disability Confidence Level 1 status and was working towards Level 2;

Recruitment, Promotion & Retention:

- There had been good progress with increasing numbers of female new starters with 11 women joining the Service in On Call positions between January to March 2019 compared to 21 in the whole of 2018;
- In terms of On Call, the Service was reviewing contracts as part of the Safer Together Programme as there had been issues raised by staff leaving in terms of work/life balance;
- The Government Equality Office had released guidance in respect of how to reduce the gender pay gap, highlighting the importance of creating an inclusive culture and supporting women’s careers and progress for part time workers

Community Inclusion:

- An internal Consultation & Engagement Task to Finish Group had been formed to increase efficiency, consistency of campaign messages and to prevent consultation overload.

The Committee enquired as to the percentage take up of staff for On Call roles. The Head of Human Resources replied that the Service had recruited 150 On Call staff in 2018/19 but he did not have the figures to hand in terms of numbers applying. Reference was also made to the cultural audit that had been undertaken and it was requested that further information be included in the report in future in terms of the issues being raised and considered. It was also requested that further information be included within the section in the paper on community inclusion in future.

It was agreed that there should be a briefing at the Members' Forum in due course in respect of On Call issues including capability, recruitment and training.

* **HRMDC/4 Requests for Retirement & Re-employment**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (HRMDC/19/8) that set out requests for retirement and/or re-employment in accordance with the approved Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

RESOLVED that the requests for retirement and/or re-employment set out at paragraph 2.3 of the report be approved.

* **HRMDC/5 Appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (Clerk) (HRMDC/19/9) seeking confirmation of the appointments made by the Fire & Rescue Authority on 7 June 2019 to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel (set up 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 appointments made were Councillors Clayton, Hannaford and Vijeh but this was subject to confirmation by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the appointments of Councillors Clayton, Hannaford and Vijeh as members of the Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure (IDRP) Panel be confirmed until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in June 2020.

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

The Meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 11.12hours

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