

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

16 September 2016

Present:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Burridge-Clayton, Chugg (Vice-Chair), Knight, Thomas and Wheeler

Apologies:-

Councillors Julian

* **HRMDC/10 Minutes**

RESOLVED that, subject to correcting the spelling error in Minute *HRMDC/4 (Absence Management) to read "...station...", the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2016 be signed as a correct record.

* **HRMDC/11 Absence Management**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/16/10) on absence management within the organisation. There had been an increase in sickness absence during the 2014-15 financial year which had continued into 2015-16 financial year. The report highlighted the action plan developed to respond to this and aimed at addressing both long-term sickness and developing a fitness, health and well-being culture.

The report also highlighted (and the Committee received a presentation on) the development of a new Absence Reporting Tool (part of a wider, Service Management Information system – "Workbench") that, amongst other things, would show – in real-time – the number of staff absent from work due to sickness at both organisational and departmental levels. The new system would be available on multiple platforms (e.g. personal computer; smartphone etc) and would be linked to other aspects of service delivery (e.g. vehicle availability).

RESOLVED that the Service continue with the action plan directed towards reducing down sickness absence.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE *HRMDC/12 BELOW)

* **HRMDC/12 Equalities Strategy - "Safer Lives, Brighter Futures" Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/16/10) on progress against those objectives and actions contained in the current iteration of the Service Equality Strategy, "Safer Lives, Brighter Futures" designed to address the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The report identified the key findings from the most recent employee survey and those cross-cutting themes identified as priorities for further development and action. The report also identified organisational gender and ethnicity figures as at August

2016 and ongoing work being undertaken by the Organisational Development Team to produce a project plan aimed at delivering a more diverse workforce.

A new Equality Strategy covering 2017 – 2020 was currently being developed and would factor in the outcomes of a review against the action plan identified in the current strategy, equality aspects of corporate priorities, guidance from the national Equality Framework for Fire & Rescue Service and internal and external consultation.

In debating the report, the Committee indicated that it would be helpful in future to have details on the number of equality issues, grievances etc. raised – along similar lines to the standing item on sickness absence monitoring.

RESOLVED

- (a). that, for future meetings, a “health of the organisation” report be submitted setting out a range of information including absence management monitoring, grievance cases, bullying and harassment cases, equality issues etc.;
- (b). that, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

* **HRMDC/13 Redundancy Compensation Rates**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/16/12) on the outcome of the annual review of redundancy compensation rates.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Authority be recommended to retain the current compensation rate (a multiplier of 1, using the an actual week’s pay) for all uniformed and support staff;
- (b). that the Committee reviews the compensation rates at least annually, with any proposed changes being recommended to the Authority following consultation with the trades unions.

* **HRMDC/14 Retirement and Re-employment**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/16/13) setting out details of four requests for retirement and re-employment submitted for approval in accordance with the Authority’s approved Pay Policy Statement for the current financial year.

The report also set out the position in relation to use of former employees for casual work in support areas. There was no associated mutuality of obligation between the Service and the individuals concerned who were not classified as having been re-employed. As such, these engagements fell outside the requirements of the Pay Policy Statement to seek Committee approval.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the requests for retirement and re-employment as set out in paragraph 2.4 of report HRMDC/16/13 be approved; and
- (b). that the distinction between casual workers and employees as set out at paragraph 3.1 of the report be noted.

* **HRMDC/15 A New Approach to Competence, Training and Assurance.**

The Committee received, for information, a presentation from the Head of the Service Training Academy on proposed overhaul of the Service approach to the governance, design, development and delivery of training. The presentation outlined the drivers for the initiative (including the Networked Fire Control Services Project; the move towards securing greater collaboration wherever practicable; technological advances). The initiative would be evidence-led and would link operational assurance to training delivery, with a focus on local training delivery wherever possible. It would also feature a “blended learning” approach, with standardised training materials being available to access on multiple devices (e.g. computers; tablets; smartphones).

(SEE ALSO MINUTE HRMDC/16 BELOW)

HRMDC/16 Blended Learning and its Links in Supporting Staff Training

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of the Service Training Academy on the “blended learning” approach now being adopted by the Service in relation to training provision. The approach would feature a standardised, centralised training resource repository capable of being accessed via multiple devices (e.g. computers; tablets; laptops). Training delivery would utilise the “flipped classroom” approach whereby relevant training materials could be accessed on-line prior to undertaking more traditional types of training.

The innovative, e-learning centred approach, utilising videos, interactive walk-throughs etc., afforded flexibility to embrace new and emerging technologies (e.g. Microsoft HoloLens) and was more easily accessible for those for whom more traditional training methods could present problems (e.g. people with dyslexia). The project had been short-listed for an international e-learning award, the winners of which would be announced at an event to be held in London on 30 November 2016.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Authority be asked to receive a presentation on the “blended learning” approach at its meeting scheduled for 19 December 2016; and
- (b). that, subject to (a) above, the presentation be noted.

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