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DORSET POLICE AUTHORITY

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 5 November 2009

A meeting of the Human Resources Committee was held at Force Headquarters, Winfrith on Thursday, 5 November 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: Mrs J T Dover (Chair)
Dr J R Gosby (Vice Chair)
Col G Brierley OBE
Mr B Cooper
Mr F Jabbari
Mr B Ratcliffe
Mr N Reed
Miss L Wilson

Also Present: Mr M J Goscomb, Chief Executive
Mr J Mumford, Policy Officer
Mr G Smith, Director of Human Resources
Mr P Channon, Head of Personnel Services
Mr N Butterworth, Head of Finance
Mrs N Anderson, Personnel Manager - Service Support
Constable C Chamberlain, Police Federation
Mrs D Potter, UNISON

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

33. Apologies were received from Mr M G Taylor CBE DL.

MINUTES

34. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2009 were taken as read and were confirmed and signed as a true record.

CODE OF CONDUCT

35. Miss L Wilson declared a personal interest in minute nos. 60 & 61 as a close relative was a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) with Dorset Police. No further declarations of personal or prejudicial interests under the Code of Conduct were received.

HUMAN RESOURCES BALANCED SCORECARD OVERVIEW – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

36.1 Mr Smith introduced the Human Resources Balanced Scorecard Overview, which provided a high level overview of HR performance in key areas. Of particular note this quarter were the reduced turnover rates for police staff and PCSOs, and the significant increase in management satisfaction with HR since the restructuring of the department.

RESOLVED

37. That the report be noted.

CORE HUMAN RESOURCES PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

38.1 Mr Smith introduced the Core HR performance pack and highlighted the key areas of note for the quarter. Police Officer levels were currently above authorised establishment whilst PCSOs were at establishment. Special Constable establishment had fallen, but actual hours worked had increased following a review of those who were inactive or unable to commit sufficient time to the role. Mr Smith voiced concerns about the proposed abolition of the opt-out from the Working Time Directive and the potential impact on Special Constables and Volunteers.

38.2 A number of queries raised by members relating to the performance data were clarified. The lack of minority ethnic police officer recruits in a number of quarters could generally be attributed to the fact that no recruitment at all took place during the period. The differences in posts advertised and numbers of applications received within quarters was due to a time lag. Errors with the labelling and cross-referencing of some tables would be amended in future packs.

RESOLVED

39. That the report be noted.

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT AND WELLBEING PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

40.1 Mr Smith updated members on the key areas of note from the quarter. Police officer sickness had been reduced but there was a rising trend among police staff. A working group had therefore been established to investigate this further. He referred to a notable increase in supportive management action for both officers and staff to capture and address identified issues at an early stage.

40.2 Members noted that musculo-skeletal related injuries continued to pose the biggest problem and it was suggested that a further breakdown of those injuries would help to identify relevant preventative measures. Mr Smith agreed to investigate this further but also advised that previous analysis had identified that the majority of injuries had occurred at home rather than at work. A pilot initiative to implement early treatment of back-related issues prior to absence from work was being piloted and would be reported in more detail to a future meeting of the Committee.

40.3 Responding to a question regarding increases in stress-related absence, Mr Smith acknowledged that this had been subject to wide fluctuations over time and was particularly difficult to manage. Early identification of issues was vital to prevent longer-term problems and a number of stress management initiatives were already in place to try and achieve this. It was noted that there were many and varied factors around stress absence and that it was rarely solely related to a work issue.

40.4 In response to members concerns that a small number of serious long-term issues were having a disproportionate effect on the overall sickness statistics, it was agreed that future reports would include separate tables for short and long-term sickness. The Chief Executive noted that it was usually short-term absence issues that required the most management action to resolve. He also requested that a

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copy of the police staff sickness problem profile be reported to the next meeting, which was agreed.

RESOLVED

41. That the report be noted.

HEALTH & SAFETY PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

42. Mr Smith advised that assault and arrest related injuries to officers continued to fall. This was possibly linked to the increase in injuries occurring during training, where early indications were that more vigorous training was resulting in fewer injuries to officers in the actual course of their duties. An increase in cycling related injuries was being investigated to identify any remedial action that may be required.

RESOLVED

43. That the report be noted.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

- 44.1 Mr Smith informed members of an initiative being undertaken by Surrey Police which had reduced their initial officer training by using their local university and colleges to provide some elements of the training. This had resulted in significant financial savings and the potential of such an approach in the South West was being explored by the regional collaboration programme. It was noted that there may be some licensing issues over ownership of courses between the NPIA and further education providers which would need to be addressed.
- 44.2 Members queried why no financial information for internal training was included for PCSOs and Special Constables in the costed training plan figures. Mr Butterworth believed that this was due to difficulties in separating out costs where these officers had also been trained in specialisms. It was agreed with the Chairman that an update would be circulated to members via the Chief Executive when these figures became available.
- 44.3 In response to a member's query, Mr Smith explained that specialist and individual training was all determined to link with current Force objectives. However, individual training requirements were usually raised through the appraisal process.
- 44.4 Mr Butterworth updated members on a query raised at the last meeting concerning the increase in internal training provision despite a reduction in the budget. He explained that there had been changes to national reporting requirements which had led to the removal of development day costs, which were previously included in these figures.

RESOLVED

45. That the report be noted.

DIVERSITY PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

46. Mr Smith updated members on the new Equality Standard for the police service which would have a major impact on how forces manage diversity issues. The Standard included a self-assessment tool covering 22 main criteria. The Force Strategic Diversity Board would be refocused to ensure that the new standard was being effectively implemented.

RESOLVED

47. That the report be noted.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PERFORMANCE PACK – APRIL TO JUNE 2009

48. Mr Smith advised members that the main point of note this quarter was the decrease in employee tribunal claims being made.

RESOLVED

49. That the report be noted.

HUMAN RESOURCES EXECUTIVE BOARD UPDATE

- 50.1 Mr Smith introduced the report which provided members with an overview of matters considered at the last Human Resources Executive Board in September. Unison had raised concerns regarding the number of police staff disciplinary cases linked to data protection issues and work was underway with the Professional Standards Department to address this. A number of disability issues regarding Estates, and in particular the Headquarters buildings, had also been raised and better communication arrangements had now been put in place to help overcome these where possible.

- 50.2 Members were advised that the Deputy Chief Constable had taken over the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) role for the regional collaboration project which was currently working on a Management of Change policy to cover all regionally driven change. A meeting with CAPITA had also taken place following their recent review of the Force and a full update would be provided for members in due course.

RESOLVED

51. That the report be noted.

SERVICE SUPPORT CENTRE

- 52.1 Members received a presentation from Mrs Anderson on the Service Support Team which had been implemented in October 2008 as part of the wider restructuring of the Human Resources department. This was now a central, multi-functional team which provided a HR helpdesk and undertook all related transactional processes, including recruitment and resourcing, contract preparation, establishment control and general administration. These new arrangements had ensured a greater consistency of approach in the application of HR practice and policies and had also resulted in increased satisfaction levels among managers and staff, and positive feedback from applicants for posts.

- 52.2 Members congratulated the Force on the smooth transfer to the new working arrangements and for the positive results being achieved. In response to a question from the Chief Executive regarding regional collaboration and the convergence of services, Mr Smith advised that some initiatives were already underway, such as the joint recruitment assessment centres currently held with Hampshire Police. In the South West, Gloucestershire Constabulary were leading on core HR issues, with the first stage being to look at the convergence of policies, procedures and systems.

RESOLVED

53. That the report be noted.

CLOSURE OF THE 30+ POLICE OFFICER RETENTION SCHEME

54. Mr Smith introduced the report which provided members with an update in relation to the closure of the 30+ police officer retention scheme to new entrants on 31 March 2010. The replacement scheme was still under discussion but was due to be implemented by 1 April 2010.

RESOLVED

55. That the report be noted.

'HEYDEY' AGE REGULATIONS LEGAL CHALLENGE UPDATE

- 56.1 Mr Smith introduced the report which provided an update in respect of the Heydey challenge to the default retirement age. The case had been referred to the European Court of Justice and had been lost. However, the Government had stated its intention to review the default retirement ages and update legislation in 2010. The Force retirement policy would therefore remain suspended pending this review.
- 56.2 Responding to a member's question regarding how many people this would affect, Mr Smith advised that the main concern was around the number of people with significant lengths of service and the dismissal process that may be required should no default retirement age be set in future. The Chief Executive informed members that there was a strong lobby from local government for the retention of the current retirement ages and firm management of extensions to employment.

RESOLVED

57. That the report be noted.

POLICE OFFICER RECRUITMENT

- 58.1 Mr Smith presented the report which provided members with an update in relation to the issues arising from the recent police officer recruitment process, which had received negative media coverage locally and had also been criticised by the Police Federation.
- 58.2 Members were advised of the reasons behind the decision to limit the number of applications issued at 500. The costs of having no limit and administering all applications received as a result would be prohibitive. It would also result in high numbers of suitable candidates eligible for a small number of vacancies, thus raising expectations and disappointing the vast majority of applicants.

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- 58.3** However, it was noted that a number of prospective candidates did experience difficulties in contacting the Force for an application, including existing staff such as PCSOs and Special Constables. A review of the process will therefore be undertaken to look at the available options in the future, including the possibility of applying a random selection process for the issuing of application packs and the legal position with regards to guaranteeing applications to serving Special Constables and PCSOs.
- 58.4** Members discussed the challenges faced with recruitment and the options available to try and ensure fairness whilst also being manageable with regard to costs and resources. Once the review has been completed the options would be presented to members for their consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- 59.** That the report be noted.

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOs)

- 60.1** Mr Smith introduced a report which provided members with an update on the current position relating to PCSOs. The report advised on the current position of the recommendations from the national review of PCSOs conducted by the NPIA, along with an update on progress against the Force PCSO action matrix. A copy of the action matrix was available on request via the Chief Executive.
- 60.2** Mr Chamberlain, on behalf of the Police Federation, raised concerns about the suitability of the PCSO uniform locally and the ability of the public to be able to distinguish between police officers and PCSOs. Mr Smith advised that there were also some identified issues around the suitable tasking of PCSOs which were currently being addressed. In response to a members' query he confirmed that PCSOs would not normally be sent to deal with confrontational situations although this was very much dependant on the individual circumstances of the incident.

RESOLVED

- 61.** That the report be noted.

SPECIAL PRIORITY PAYMENT AND BONUS SCHEME 2010/11

- 62.1** Mr Channon introduced the report which outlined the proposed schemes for Special Priority Payments and Bonus Payments for 2010/11. He outlined some of the background to the schemes which required forces to allocate 2% of their annual basic pay bill for Special Priority Payments for ranks below Superintendent. A PNB agreement in relation to bonus payments allows for bonuses of between £50 and £500 to be paid per head for occasional work of an outstandingly demanding, unpleasant or important nature.
- 62.2** The minimum spend on the Special Priority Payment scheme for 2010/11 was estimated to be £904,300. Under the conditions of the scheme, the maximum possible number of officers who could receive a payment would be 585, no more than 40% of the total Force strength. The base budget for the Bonus Scheme was £85,200.

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- 62.3** Mr Chamberlain expressed concerns that the Police Federation had not been fully consulted on the proposed arrangements for the schemes or on the findings of the Equal Pay Audit which had included the Special Priority Payment scheme within its remit. The Chief Executive suggested that members agree the budgets for the schemes at this meeting for the purposes of budget setting for 2010/11. However, the details of the respective schemes should be presented for members' further consideration at the next meeting of the Committee following consultation between the Force and Police Federation on the proposals and any possible amendments as a result of those discussions.

RESOLVED

- 63.1** To approve the budgets for the Special Priority Payments and Bonus Schemes for 2010/11 as set out in the report.
- 63.2** To further consider the specific proposals of the schemes at the next meeting of the Committee, following consultation between the Force and Police Federation.

REVIEW OF THE e-PPP PROCESS

- 64.** Mr Smith introduced the report which provided members with an update on the review of the current e-PPP appraisal process which had been instigated following concerns over a lack of confidence in the system among staff. The Force Leadership Board was progressing the review and an update on progress would be reported to the Committee in six months' time.

RESOLVED

- 65.** That the report be noted.

EXTENSION TO THE RIGHT TO REQUEST FLEXIBLE WORKING FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 16

- 66.** Mr Smith introduced the report which updated members on the recent extension of the statutory right to request flexible working for parents with children under 16. He advised that it was already Force policy to accept requests to work flexibly from all staff with each case being considered on its individual merits. The change in legislation would therefore have no impact on current policy.

RESOLVED

- 67.** That the report be noted.

[Meeting ended at 12.30pm]