

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	<b>HRMDC/20/2</b>
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT &amp; DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>21 OCTOBER 2020</b>
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	<b>PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<p><b>(a) <i>That the progress towards achieving the aims set out within the People Strategy are considered as a standing item at the Human Resources Management &amp; Development Committee and that the progress is updated at each meeting; and</i></b></p> <p><b>(b) <i>Subject to (a) above, the report be noted.</i></b></p>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>At the meeting on the 5 November 2019, the Committee was introduced to the People Strategy which had been created through considerable engagement and involvement from our staff.</p> <p>The People Strategy includes five strategic themes which will enable us to create the ideal future workplace. The themes are:</p> <p>Leadership Inclusion Ways of Working Learning &amp; Development Health, Safety &amp; Wellbeing</p> <p>Each theme has been broken down into areas of focus and this report provides an update on the work that has been undertaken in progressing towards these strategic themes.</p> <p>Within each theme of the strategy, there is reference to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the progress of the People Strategy, and our responses to supporting the workforce during this time. This has presented both significant challenges and transformational opportunities in relation to every theme.</p>
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	These will be managed through the Departmental Plans and where associated with the Safer Together Programme then there will be further project management.
<b>EQUALITY RISK &amp; BENEFITS ASSESSMENT</b>	The People strategy supports our requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Appendix 1: Our Values - Pandemic icons



Core values A4 V9  
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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Home Office, Fire and Rescue National Framework for England,  
May 2018

National Fire Chiefs Council, Fire and Rescue People Strategy  
2017/2022

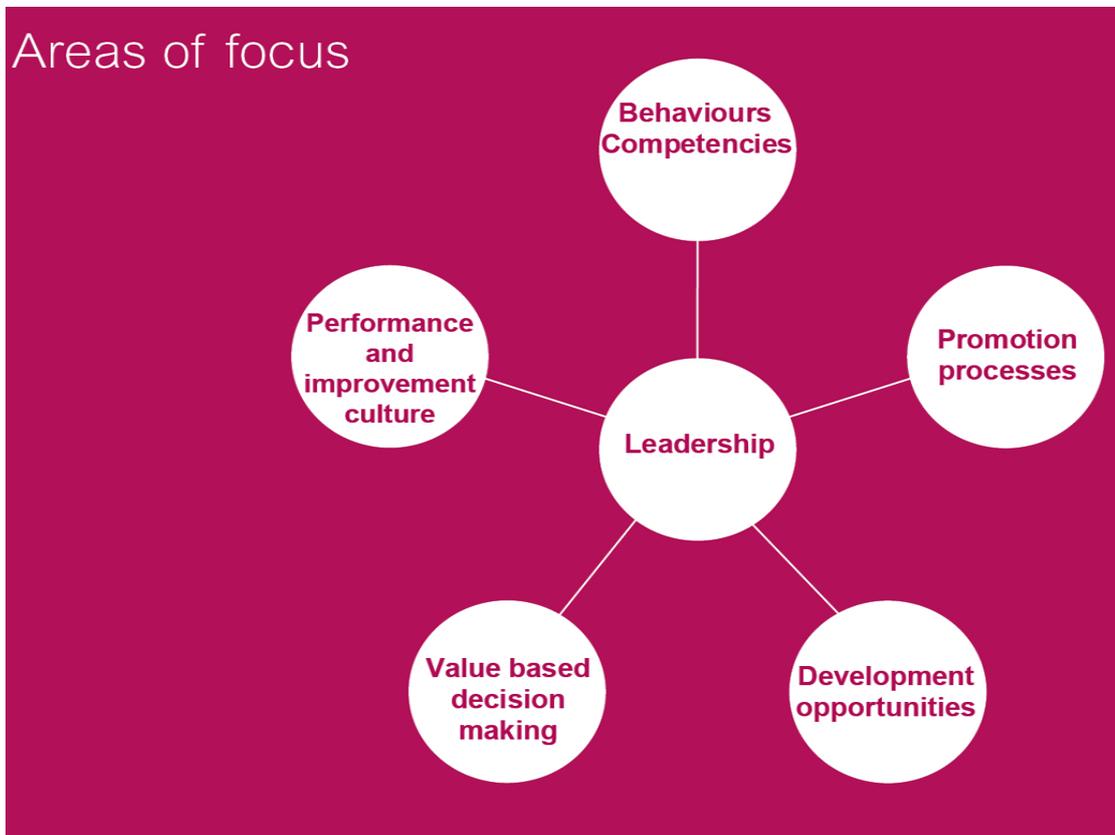
## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the meeting on the 5 November 2019, the Committee was introduced to the People Strategy which had been created through considerable engagement and involvement from our staff. The Authority has an Integrated Risk Management Plan that describes the risks in our community and there is a Fire & Rescue Plan that describes the challenges the Service faces and which sets out its strategic intent. From these plans, the Service has created the Safer Together Change & Improvement Programme.
- 1.2 Within the Fire & Rescue Plan, there are strategic themes and within the People strategic themes, there is an objective to develop a People Strategy for the Service. A People Strategy can be described as a strategic document that outlines the organisation's approach and relationship with its staff and how they will achieve the business aims of the organisation.
- 1.3 Within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (the Service), the People Strategy enables us to set out what it will be like to work here and how we will treat one another. The strategy was built on evidence of how the Service needs to improve the workplace and the aspirations and ideas of our staff. This allows the Service to tell its story in terms of where it wants to be, how it can get there, what people will see, how they will feel and the behaviours they will exhibit and promote.
- 1.4 Externally, the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. The National Framework provides an overall strategic direction to fire and rescue authorities, which includes driving forward an ambitious programme for workforce reform. The National Framework states that each fire and rescue authority should have in place a people strategy that has been designed in collaboration with the workforce. The national framework goes on to say that the People Strategy should take into account the principles set out in the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC), Fire & Rescue People Strategy.
- 1.5 Through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, the Service has been assessed in terms of its Effectiveness, Efficiency and how well we look after our People. For the HMICFRS assessment of People, the Service was rated as Requiring Improvement. The Service is good at getting the right people with the right skills but needs to improve on how it promotes the right values and culture, ensures fairness and promotes diversity and how it manages performance and develop its leaders. The aims within the People Strategy will support improvements to the organisation.

- 1.6 The report covers the five People Strategic Themes which will create the ideal future workplace, as prescribed by staff. These themes are Leadership, Inclusion, Ways of Working, Learning & Development and Health, Safety & Wellbeing. This report provides an update on how the Service is progressing work towards these strategic themes. Each theme has been broken down into areas of focus and this report provides an update on the work that has been undertaken in progressing towards these strategic themes.
- 1.7 This report includes an explanation under each theme of the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the progress of the People Strategy, and the Service's responses to support the workforce. This has presented both significant challenges and transformational opportunities in relation to every theme.
- 1.8 The People Strategy Monitoring Group has increased its meeting frequency to every 6 weeks, and has developed some key statements designed to measure the Service's progress against the high level aspirations. These statements will form part of the next staff survey to be undertaken in the autumn of 2020. This will be reported to help demonstrate the outcomes of the work described in this report.

**2. LEADERSHIP STRATEGIC THEME**

- 2.1 Our aspiration: Our leaders will communicate a clear vision, take decisions and empower people to make change and improvement happen. They will be visible leaders with a diversity of backgrounds, skills and experiences who demonstrate open and honest listening and communication and are united in living our values.

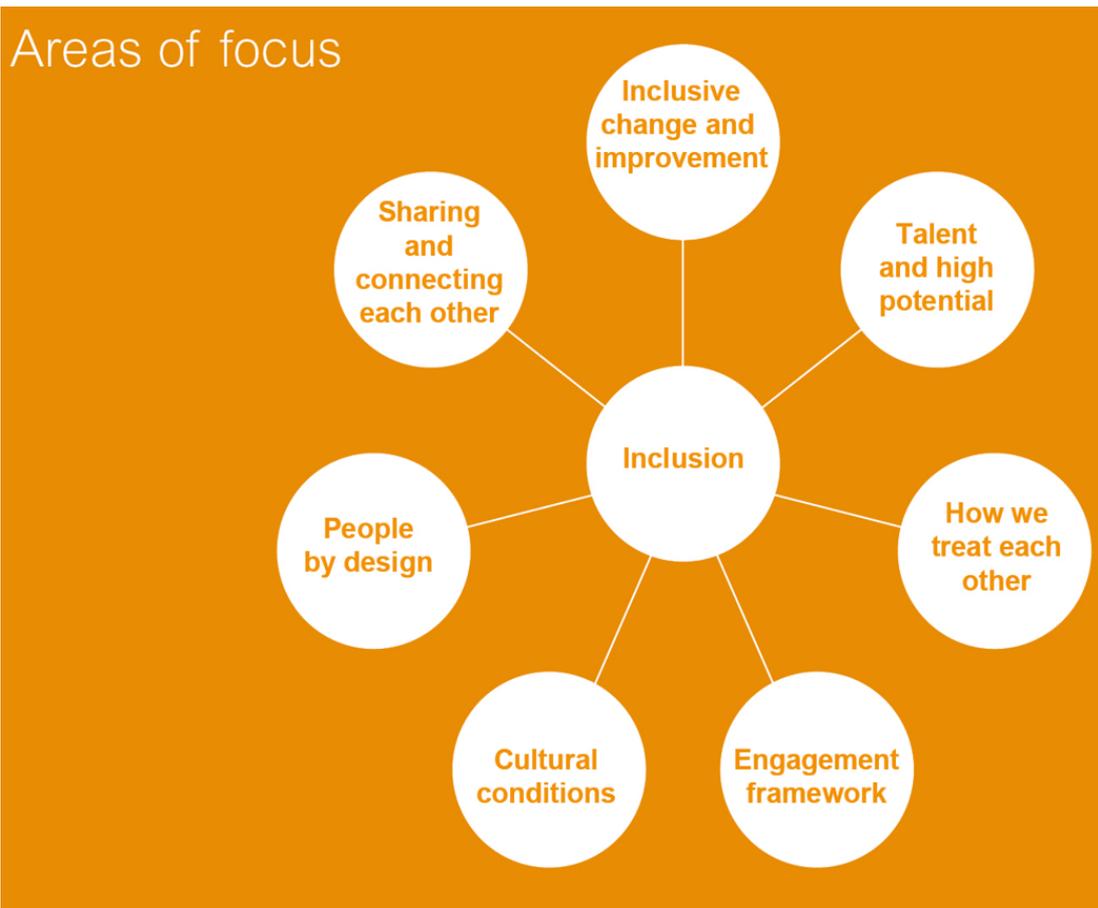


Our leaders, at all levels, will be developed and prepared to take us into the future together. Our Areas of focus are shown below:

- 2.2 The areas of progress since the last update to the Committee towards the Leadership theme have been in the following areas:
- 2.3 A leadership strategy has been prepared which is aligned to the NFCC Leadership Framework and sets out the Service's approach to Inspiring Leadership. The document describes where we are now and how we will move forward together.
- 2.4 A Talent Pool framework has been developed for each level in the organisation which will allow our leaders to be developed, in line with our vision and the NFCC framework, before they are placed into role. This talent pool will select staff who demonstrate leadership potential from both our operational and support services and they will learn and develop leadership and management skills together. Roles available will be identified through strategic workforce planning allowing the number of temporary roles to be reduced, whilst allowing some flexibility for organisational need and experiential development opportunity.
- 2.5 A staff led task and finish group was set up to look into empowerment and decision making in the Service. The group co-developed a decision making tool, which helps to identify where decisions should be made and who needs to be consulted and involved. The tool has Our Values as its basis, helping to ensure that decisions made are values led. This tool will be rolled out to the wider Service shortly.
- 2.6 The opportunities presented by virtual meetings and live Q and A sessions during the Response phase to the Pandemic has been embraced by teams and leadership to reach colleagues across the service more easily, and this engagement via Facebook Workplace has been received well by watches, improving the visibility and accessibility of senior leadership.

### **3. INCLUSION STRATEGIC THEME**

- 3.1 Our aspiration: We will only benefit from a workforce that is more representative of our communities when everyone can be themselves and work together as one organisation regardless of role or workplace. We will recognise and utilise both diversity of thought and experience in the organisation for better decision making. We will be developing better solutions by engaging and involving employees in planning, idea generation and decision making. We will work ever closer with our trade unions for the benefit of all staff. Our Areas of focus are shown overleaf:



- 3.2 The areas of progress since the last update towards achieving a more diverse workforce and a more inclusive working environment has been in the following areas:
- 3.3 The Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Steering Group will now be led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to reflect the priority of this area within the organisation. Regular meetings will resume in the autumn to ensure continued progress against the People Strategy.
- 3.4 The 'People by Design' People Impact Assessment process is fully embedded in our project Governance and its value has been demonstrated in the outcomes, with staff engagement and involvement being planned and considered thoroughly. This has resulted in more sustainable and inclusive initiatives such as the On-call Pay for Availability and People Development projects. This approach is fully scalable and is now being applied to policy changes and smaller initiatives. We have been approached by other Fire and Rescue Services who are planning transformational changes and would like to use this tool.
- 3.5 The Service conducts an Annual Recruitment & Diversity report. The key findings this year are:
- The biggest number of female On Call new starters – 21. Together with 3 new female Wholetime staff starting in the same period we reached the highest ever female representation in operational roles with over a 100 women;

- Female representation in general has gone up by more than 1%. On Call female representation has gone up by 0.9% which is 4 times as much as the increase in 2018 of just 0.2%;
- The attraction rate from female applicants for Support vacancies (45%) has increased by 9% from 2018;
- The On Call vacancies female application percentage is 14.1%, twice as high as in 2018 (7.4%);
- The numbers of applicants with a different ethnic background, on average, are close to reflecting our community (5.3%) with Support 6.2%, On Call 4.5% and Wholetime (despite being only internal candidates) 5.5%;
- Application rates from LGBT for Support (7.3%), On Call (3.6%) and Wholetime (8.2%) are all higher than the community (2.2%);
- Within the workforce the identification as LGBT is 2.4% increased from 1.8%, and now higher than the community average of 2.2%. In addition, the non-disclosure rate has reduced;
- In the Support group the percentage of staff with a disability gaining a promotion was 17%;
- The rate of promotion in the On Call group (2%) is low in view of the percentage of women in that group (6%);
- Female representation in the senior management group (Area Manager and above and Grade 10 and above) increased from 18.5% to 28.5%; and
- Turnover has, in general and in all but 1 group, reduced.

3.6 Since 2019, the Service has been a member of the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEI), which is a leading employer network covering all aspects of equality and inclusion in the workplace. They provide guidance, support around developing policies and facilitate benchmarking through an assessment called TIDE. This assessment measures an organisation's approach and progress on diversity and inclusion (D&I) in areas like Strategy, Leadership, Recruitment Training, Communication and Procurement.

3.7 In 2018/19, the Service completed the assessment for the first time and received a Bronze Award. This year (May 2019-June 2020), after improving many areas including leadership, recruitment, employment practices and procurement in line with our People Strategy, the Service is proud to announce receipt of the Silver Award.

3.8 Ninety eight organisations worldwide, including 4 Fire & Rescue Services, submitted the assessment and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service achieved 29<sup>th</sup> overall. This is a fantastic achievement, which highlights the progress that has been made and shows the increased awareness and support for an inclusive culture.

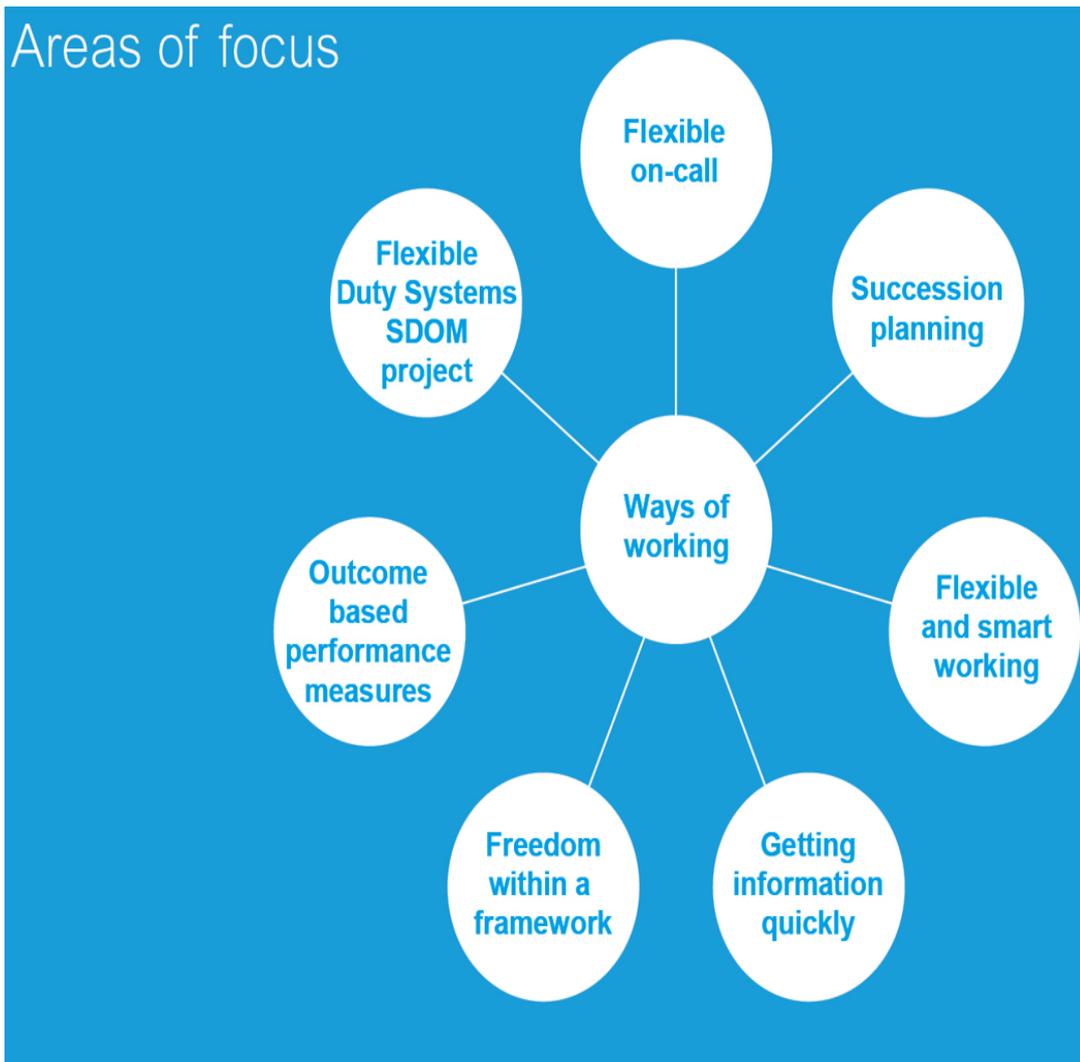
- 3.9 Partly as a result of the findings of the HMICFRS assessment, the Estates team has started a Dignity at Work review of all locations to identify whether they comply with legal requirements and provide dignity for those working at those locations. A plan has been drafted with identified priorities for those locations with the highest need. Although work has been postponed for a period, considerations will be given to resume this, taking into account any of the learning of the pandemic response period.
- 3.10 A Recruitment Working Group has developed two Firefighter recruitment processes, one for internal recruitment from On-call to Wholetime and one for external recruitment from the public to Wholetime.
- 3.11 The On Call to Wholetime process was opened up in June 2020 and has so far attracted 268 applicants from across the Service. The process includes Endorsement meetings with line managers and then Moderating Panels to ensure that there is consistency across the Service. The aim is for the first contracts to be issued in October 2020. The process will remain open on a rolling basis so staff will be able to apply or re-apply at a later stage, providing access to opportunities for more staff.
- 3.12 In preparation for the external process, the Service is planning positive action initiatives including targeted social media messages and distribution of posters and leaflets in areas with higher diversity. A specific plan, which will be under continuous review, has been drawn up.
- 3.13 Initiatives in relation to 'Progression' which are outside the scope of the People Development Project include the facilitation of cross organisational Action Learning Sets in collaboration with emergency service partners. Action Learning Sets are a structured method of problem solving which enable small groups to address complicated issues by meeting regularly and working collectively. This tool is especially geared to learning and personal development at the professional and managerial levels. We also have a collaboration with Devon & Cornwall Constabulary, Dorset Constabulary and Devon County Council which will facilitate the implementation of a sponsorship programme for women which is titled 'Our Time'. This programme has the aim to remove barriers to increasing diversity in middle and senior management. The initiative has 7 participants and will run for 12 months from September 2020.
- 3.14 Other ongoing initiatives to ensure an inclusive working environment are:
- The Service have achieved Disability Confident Level 2 status and we are looking to work towards level 3 in due course;
  - Setting up of a minority ethnic support and awareness group to discuss and explore the issues highlighted through the Black Lives Matter movement;
  - Contribution to the NHS producing a virtual Pride video;
  - National collaboration in relation to Gypsy & Traveller Equal Access to Services; and

- The 'Connecting to the Community' project which aims to connect Fire crews with the community they serve and raise awareness and understanding of the needs of those communities.

- 3.15 Person to person Community engagement has been significantly reduced due to the restrictions around Covid-19. All career fairs, cadet meetings, school visits, open days, 'Have a go' days, bike courses and many other activities, apart from virtual engagement, were ceased. However, partner collaboration and engagement in different areas, to support the community to cope with the unprecedented situation, were agreed and undertaken.
- 3.16 An engagement framework has been developed which sets out how we will engage with our staff, partners and communities. The framework sits under the Communication and Engagement Strategy and aims to bring all the engagement activity happening across the Service together under a set of principles and practices so that we can get the most out of our interactions with various stakeholder groups. Our use of Facebook Workplace and virtual meetings has increased during the Covid-19 Response phase and there are plans to develop a range of ongoing engagement mechanisms for different staff groups. This will help for better two-way communication across the workforce, and aid important conversations so that staff have more opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas on key issues.
- 3.17 Following a suggestion from station, the Service's Values icons were redesigned to reflect how we live the values and look after the Health, safety and Wellbeing of communities and each other throughout the Pandemic. The redesigned Values icons are set out at Appendix 1 for reference.

#### **4. WAYS OF WORKING**

- 4.1 Our aspiration: Our employees will be empowered and trusted with performance measured on productivity and outcomes. We will offer a range of flexible options that will improve inclusion, attract and retain a diverse workforce and enable us to match our resources to risk. Our technology and communications will be better and barriers to improving ways of working will be removed, with things that need doing quickly getting done. We will work together, as one organisation towards our vision and we will recognise and celebrate collaborative successes. The areas of focus are shown overleaf:



4.2 The areas of progress since the last update to the Committee are set out below.

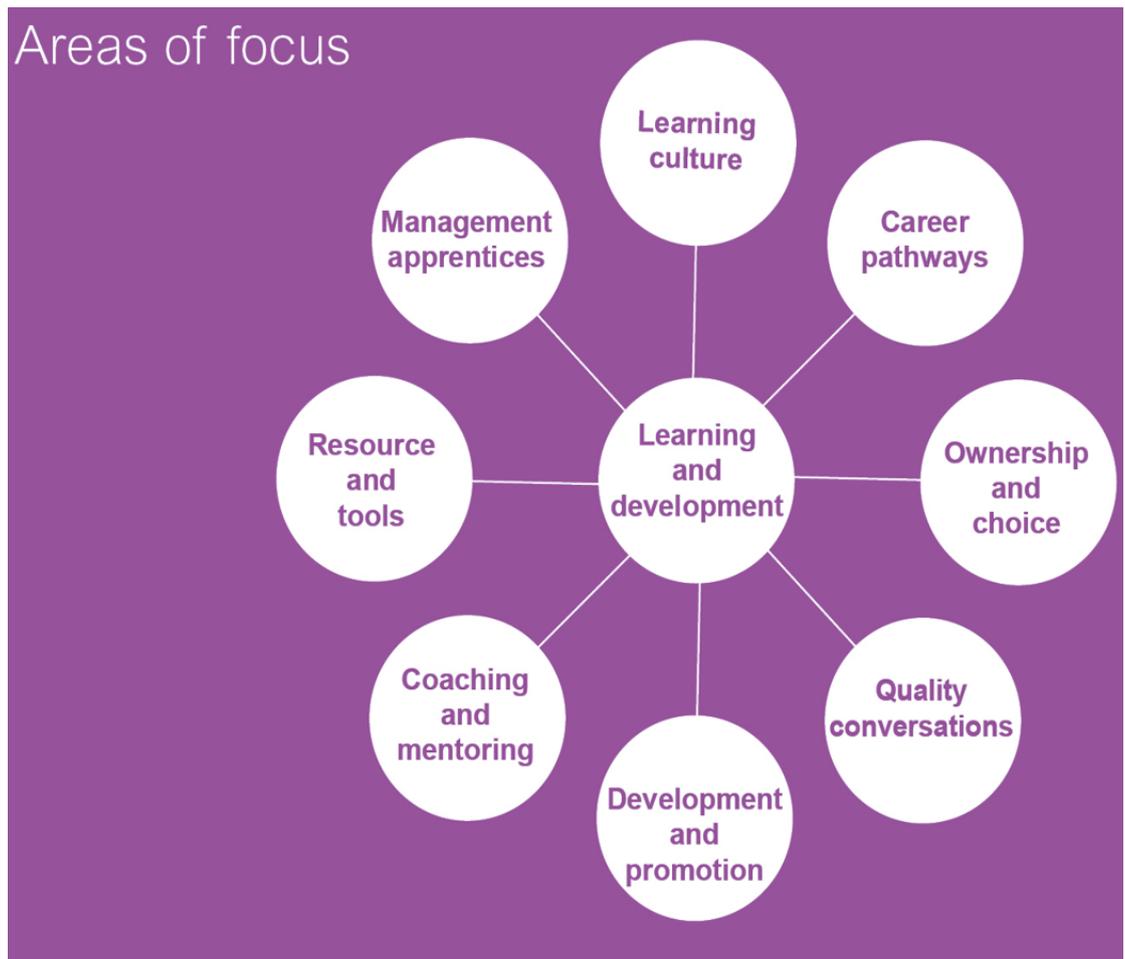
4.3 For the On-call Stations, the Service has worked with staff and Trade Unions to develop a new enhanced payment system for On-call staff which is referred to as Pay for Availability. Within this payment system, staff are paid in the usual way for work activity but also receive a payment for every hour of on-call cover that they give. This payment for availability represents a considerable investment in our on-call staff. This payment system is intended to recognise and reward the commitment from the Service's dedicated workforce in giving their availability to ensure that the Service can respond to emergency incidents across its two counties of Devon & Somerset. This payment system was one of those suggested by staff at the first engagement session and is expected to improve appliance availability, the retention rates for our On-call Firefighters and enable the Service to recruit new Firefighters for the future that will be more representative of our communities and improve diversity and inclusion within the workforce.

- 4.4 Prior to Covid-19, the Service and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have been working on new duty systems that will improve the Wholetime Ways of Working. This work began with extensive staff involvement, asking them how they would like to work to help develop sustainable proposals. If agreed the proposed new duty systems will improve efficiency within the Service, be more effective for the public and improve the working lives of staff by providing a range of more flexible working options that will improve inclusion and attract and retain a diverse workforce. The intended approach is to have a modified 24/7 duty system and also a Day Duty System. This work was put on hold during the Covid-19 period of lockdown and further work will commence on this once the Service has completed the negotiations in relation to the Pay for Availability system.
- 4.5 For Support staff, the Service is seeking to create more flexible ways of working under smart working principles. During the Response phase of the Pandemic, the Service was able to accelerate its aspirations for more flexible working with a change to core hours along with working from home for all those without an essential need to be in the workplace. Many teams reported working from home to be more family friendly and flexible. Staff felt they have been more productive and task focused. Meetings with line managers whilst via video or phone are more regular, and more focused. Many staff have been able to reduce or remove travelling time. Work wear can be more relaxed at home particularly in the hot weather that was experienced during the lockdown period. However, there is no effective substitute in some cases for face to face engagement and the Service has had to change some of its established collaborative ways of working, such as workshops, to a more limited approach until it is safe to resume face to face interaction. Teams generally feel a blended approach to flexible working is preferable, as the benefits of social interaction are essential for a healthy workplace culture, and to support mental health and wellbeing. The Service is taking this opportunity whilst the culture is shifting to scope out a smart working vision with staff, and the physical, technical and cultural requirements. The Service will then move towards a new working model that will provide both ongoing resilience in business continuity and meet the aspirations set out in the people strategy.

## **5. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 The aspiration: We will create a learning culture which provides consistency and equality of opportunity to allow everyone to achieve their full potential. We will be innovative and creative in offering various opportunities and career pathways for people to develop and to ensure they have the right skills for their role. Our staff will benefit from regular performance conversations and development will be tailored, easy to access and available throughout our careers.

5.2 The Areas of focus are shown below:



5.3 The areas of progress since the last update to the Committee towards the Learning & Development theme have been in the following areas.

5.4 The Personal Performance & Development (PPD) system has been rolled out across the Service to support staff in having regular, quality conversations focussed on all aspects of staff development, performance and wellbeing. There was a decline in use of the system reported during the initial phase of Covid-19 and this will be addressed with a new policy including a minimum frequency for conversations.

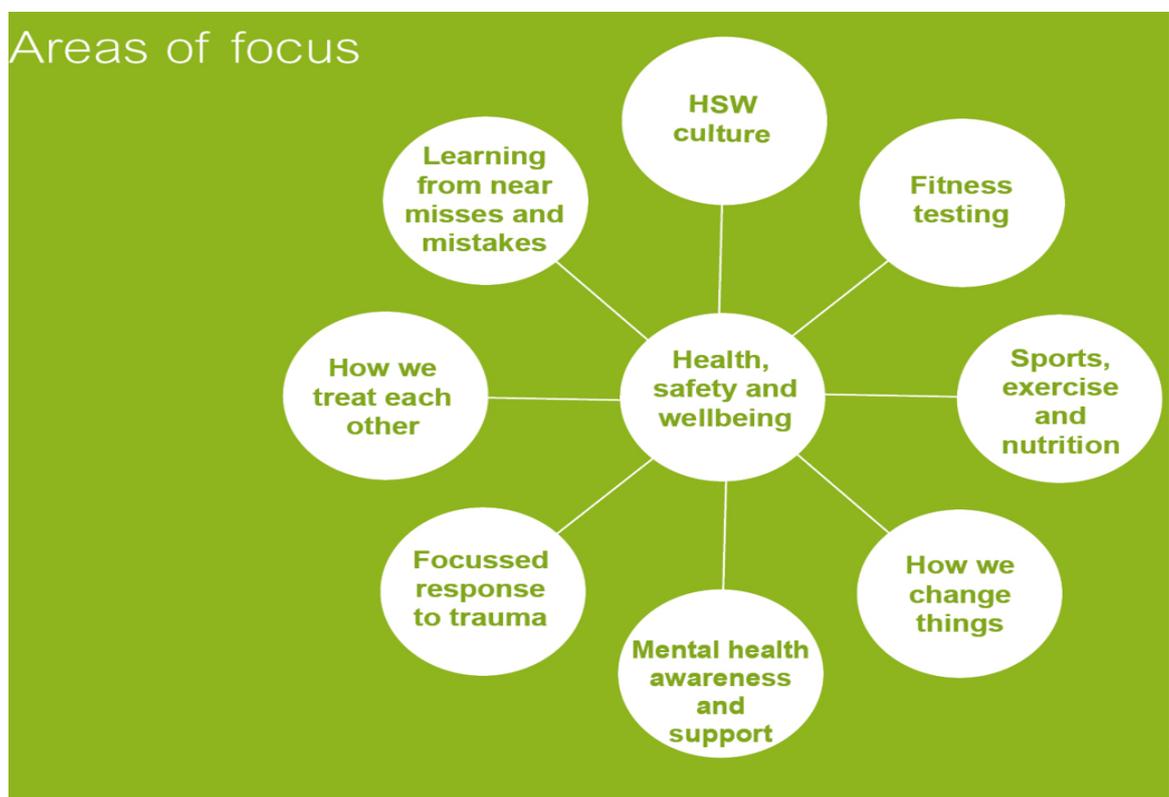
5.5 In the Covid-19 Response phase our internal coaches were brought together in a virtual session to support them in providing resilience coaching for managers to during this difficult time. 'Coaching Culture' tools and resources are to be implemented which include 360 feedback capability to support development.

5.6 Guidance for managers on team building exercises that can be carried out in the virtual environment was shared as part of our action plan to support staff whilst they work at home.

- 5.7 There was initially a significant impact for cohorts on leadership development programmes due to Covid-19 which were to be delivered face-to-face. In line with the creative approach to essential training put in place by the Academy, the Service has now created virtual learning environments and webinars, allowing this programme to resume, and to provide a resilient blended learning approach for the future. In our Recovery phase, any face to face sessions which are essential, will be limited in size and adhere to Covid-19 safe protocols.
- 5.8 Development programmes are being developed for each level in the organisation for both operational and non-operational staff with new ways of capturing evidence of achievements and a range of supporting online tools, which will be available to all. A robust and appropriately resourced Talent Management Delivery Framework is being scoped, to ensure that all staff can benefit from the new Leadership and Management development programmes being developed into the future.

6. **HEALTH SAFETY & WELLBEING**

- 6.1 The Strategic theme is defined as: We will be developing a holistic approach to health & safety, fitness and wellbeing which supports our staff so that they can remain fit, safe, healthy and fulfilled throughout their careers. We will encourage and support employees by building a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture and create an environment which improves work/life balance and quality of working life. A clear and supportive fitness testing policy will help keep our staff safe and healthy and a greater integration of work, sports and social activities will help break down barriers and bring people together. Our Areas of focus are shown below:



- 6.2 The areas of progress since the last update to the Committee towards the Health, Safety and Wellbeing theme have been in the following areas.
- 6.3 The health safety and wellbeing considerations in the Covid-19 Response and Recovery phases are wide reaching for both staff and the communities served. These include:
- the shielding and containment considerations of a phased return to delivering prevention services in the home;
  - considering the fall out for the on-call community who may have been affected by loss of primary employment; and
  - the changes that support staff rapidly made in their ways of working; and to those who very sadly suffered illness or loss.
- 6.4 In the Covid-19 Response phase, People Impact Assessment considerations have been captured, and action plans to support the health and wellbeing of our staff implemented via:
- Covid-19 Business Continuity Response People Impact Assessment (staff);
  - Desktop research into pandemic behaviour, the impacts of lockdown, the likely UK recovery plan and the needs of people in a Recovery phase;
  - A Recovery PIA workshop conducted with the People Cell (subject matter experts), the Recovery Lead and the Business Continuity manager;
  - One to one interviews with key stakeholders;
  - Covid-19 staff survey to test the temperature on a range of issues affecting staff;
  - Gathering information on team impacts across the service in terms of their health and wellbeing; and
  - Specific work with On-call staff to identify issues and ensure they have access to wellbeing.
- 6.5 This information has supported the Service in developing, for example: online access to wellbeing support, wide ranging guidance for managers and staff on remote working and in developing a process for staff to assess and discuss their individual risk levels using a Covid-19 Age risk calculator before they partially return to the workplace in Recovery phase 3. Staff who have been in the workplace throughout the Response phase are similarly encouraged to assess their risk using the Covid-19 Age risk calculator and to discuss this with their line manager in a health and wellbeing conversation should they have any concerns. Staff who have identified in higher risk groups are referred to Occupational Health for clinically assessed arrangements to be made.

- 6.6 As part of the People Strategy, the Service committed to creating a clear fitness testing policy and process with improved support and information to make sure that our staff remain physically fit for their roles. Firefighter fitness was raised as a cause of concern by the HMICFRS inspectors as at that time we had not sufficiently tested our staff under the new arrangements. We undertook an Interim Fitness Assessment of all Operational staff in September/October 2019. With Covid-19, the Service has not been able to fully implement its intended Fitness Policy, however, having completed Risk Assessments it is able to proceed with the Annual Fitness Assessments this autumn. The Service is also introducing an annual fitness assessment for uniformed officers. It has also recommenced the 3 yearly medicals which also incorporate a Fitness Test alongside the Occupational Health Medicals.
- 6.7 Across the People Strategy, the Service refers to creating the conditions to enable the culture it aspires to. A task and finish group was set up to look into how the Service promotes fairness and respect in the organisation.
- 6.8 Following on from this work, the Organisational Development team is developing a range of interventions where the fostering of one key cultural condition of 'psychological safety' will underpin improvements relating to several cultural targets. This includes promoting both fairness and respect and a robust health and safety culture. A series of interventions are being developed, learning from industry and military organisations to ensure that this is a prevalent feature of our culture.

## 7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 This report provides an update on how the Service is progressing work towards the 5 strategic themes within its People Strategy which are Leadership, Inclusion, Ways of Working, Learning & Development and Health, Safety & Wellbeing.
- 7.2 This work has progressed very well despite the difficult circumstances in 2020/21 to date due to Covid-19, demonstrated with the progression of the ENEI Silver Award.

**JOE HASSELL**  
**Deputy Chief Fire Officer**