

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	PC/21/6
MEETING	PEOPLE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	14 OCTOBER 2021
SUBJECT OF REPORT	PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report is noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This update outlines progress since the previous report on the People Strategy 2019 - 2022. Out of fifty three initial areas of focus identified in the strategy, all but six are operating and progressing.</p> <p>The report lists the areas that are yet to be delivered and the rationale as well as progress since that last report.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	None
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	These are carried out for each workstream/project
APPENDICES	None
BACKGROUND PAPERS	People Strategy 2019-2022

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The People Strategy was published in 2019, following extensive evidence collection and engagement with staff. Staff described the workplace they wanted, through themed statements that form the aspirational objectives. Underpinning these objectives are identified 'areas of focus' which were then developed into service plan actions, and a People Development Project in the Safer Together Programme, recently closed and transitioned into a People Development function as business as usual.
- 1.2. This report outlines progress of interest against the areas of focus under each theme, since the previous report. Out of fifty three initial areas of focus identified in the strategy, all but six are operating and progressing. The areas that have not progressed are detailed below.
- 1.3. Whilst greater flexibility in On-call contracts has been achieved through Pay for Availability (P4A), flexible whole-time contracts have not progressed in Service due to the following reasons:
 - the limited capacity of the project team whilst implementing pay for availability on a station by station basis:
 - whole-time work activities have been reviewed to increase prevention, protection and risk activities by re-arranging day and night activities therefore realising one of the benefits of alternate duty systems; and;
 - a National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) 'Working Patterns' project has been established which includes whole-time duty systems of which the DCFO and Head of HR/OD are project board members.
- 1.4. The Service will review the outcomes of increased firefighter activity and the output from the NFCC Working Patterns project before making any final decisions.
- 1.5. There has been much progress in developing revised fair and transparent operational progression processes, however, the Service's ambition to address direct entry to support greater diversity in leadership roles has not progressed. This is because this area of work has emerged as an NFCC initiative, and the Service will take its lead from that work when complete. In addition, the Service needed to focus on supporting established career pathways rather than introducing alternative career pathways.
- 1.6. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the Service's ambition to support a range of cross sector secondments to improve learning and development, with the exception of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and support for the South West Ambulance Services Trust (SWAST) has not progressed. This will be reviewed as new ways of working are progressed and the impacts of Covid 19 through the autumn and winter of 2021 are understood.

- 1.7. Whilst positive action continues alongside the open recruitment processes, the Service's ambition for braver, positive action practices was equally impacted by Covid-19. Plans for a refreshed approach that includes the use of an outreach practical assessment vehicle are currently being revived.
- 1.8. A 'Connecting to Communities' project planned before Covid-19 has been on pause. This is also being revisited, in particular linking with the renewed approach to prevention work being undertaken by wholetime crews.
- 1.9. The People Strategy is due to be implemented by 2022 and, to align with the planning framework, evidence collection to inform the 2022 – 2026 Strategy has begun. Results for the HMICFRS inspection and further evidence collection will also be used to inform the new Strategy, an initial draft of which will be presented to the next meeting of the People Committee on 17 January 2022.
- 1.10. Many of the areas in the current People Strategy will remain the focus of attention in the long term and will be subject to continuous improvement to make a measurable difference. In addition to the HMICFRS results, a Workplace Review, including a comprehensive staff survey, will be undertaken in the first quarter 2022/23 to support the evaluation of the impact of these interventions in achieving the People Strategy objectives.

2. LEADERSHIP

- 2.1. To support leadership visibility, open and honest communication and clarity of vision, face to face Leading Conversations events have been held for middle managers across operational and support teams. The events were an opportunity to thank managers across the organisation in person for the work they have done and are doing with their teams, to share progress and discuss strategic priorities. The sessions also involved a leadership learning session around inclusion and psychological safety. These sessions combine with other internal engagement mechanisms with staff groups that support two-way communications with our staff.
- 2.2. The People Development project has closed now, with work transitioning into the People Development function. High performing Station Managers who were successful recently at assessment centre will be eligible for posts and benefit from a comprehensive development plan to support them in their progression.

3. INCLUSION

- 3.1. Since the previous report to the Committee in July 2021, the communication, learning strategy and integration of the recently launched Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services is underway.
- 3.2. Aspects of the new Fairness and Respect toolkit which support the Fairness and Respect policy have been published to support staff who may experience, witness or manage bullying and harassment and to provide more data for the Service on informal and unreported incidents. An interactive version of this content is to be published shortly.

- 3.3. The 'Safe to: learn, contribute and challenge' intervention continues. Following feedback through the 2019 HMICFRS staff survey, 42% of respondents felt that if they had ideas they would not be listened to. As a result, an audit was commissioned through Devon Audit Partnership as part of the Internal Audit Plan for 2020-21 and this was completed in December 2020. The audit was designed by the Organisational Development team using a recognised measure of psychological safety. This aimed to help assess, identify and address issues which may prevent staff from feeling they are: included, safe to learn and make mistakes, safe to contribute and safe to challenge the status quo.
- 3.4. As the response rate at 127 of 1,948 was fairly low overall, the audit providers advised that the Service must be cautious in specifying any potential trends or patterns. There were, however, a number of potential issues which may be indicative of trends due to them being raised by multiple individuals. As such 'Limited Assurance' was given. All of the issues raised related to negative experiences or perceptions that are being addressed through the 'Safe To' Initiative.
- 3.5. The 'Safe To' intervention is multi layered, supporting inclusive leadership, positive behaviours and effective teams, and also underpins our intervention on Engaged Safety Culture. Since the previous report to the Committee, an online leadership module has been developed to augment the ongoing face to face engagement through team sessions and interventions.
- 3.6. Following the 'Leading Conversations' events where inclusion safety was showcased in a development session, a survey using the same framework questions as the audit is being sent to participants to support ongoing monitoring.
- 3.7. The Service has seen improvement in this area however. In the 2020 HMICFRS staff survey asking the question that:
- "I am confident my ideas or suggestions will be listened to"
- The response rate increased from 42% to 72% of respondents agreeing, showing positive progress.
- 3.8. An Aging Workforce Group has been established to inform the actions needed in relation to the specific impacts relating to an aging workforce, to support retention, succession planning and sustainability in service delivery. This will inform actions for the People Strategy 2022-2026.

4. WAYS OF WORKING

- 4.1. Flexible on-call contracts have been introduced following extensive involvement and engagement with staff, beginning with asking them how they would like to work. The Pay for Availability (P4A) scheme was developed, and is operating on a voluntary basis in around 80% of on-call stations.

- 4.2. A new Workforce Planning Board has been formed and met in August 2021. This will enable regular review, monitoring and action planning across stakeholders to forecast and address vacancies and emerging needs in recruitment to aid succession planning and sustainability of service delivery.

5. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 Leadership and Management Apprenticeships are underway. The wider Apprenticeship strategy has been developed and managed through the People Development Team, and this will support a cohesive and sustainable approach to utilising levy spend and using apprenticeships to develop both new starters and existing staff.

6. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 6.1. The intervention to develop psychological safety, 'Safe to: Learn, Contribute and Challenge', underpins the work being undertaken to develop an engaged safety culture. This is a complex intervention which involves both hardwiring change into processes and systems together with leadership and engagement to develop the required behavioural changes. A "Just Culture" approach has been embedded in Health and Safety policy and foundational learning and engagement with operational management teams is complete. Engagement with operational crews is underway.
- 6.2. Oscar Kilo is the home of the National Police Wellbeing Service. It has been designed to be used by emergency services across the whole of the UK. It provides a framework of clear statements to ensure all aspects of wellbeing are fully developed. The framework is used to ensure the Service has a robust and proactive wellbeing provision for its employees. Our internal assessment is now complete and, in addition to informing additional wellbeing actions, is being prepared for peer review.
- 6.3. A mental health and wellbeing intervention framework to support managers and staff has been developed, supporting self-referral and setting out interventions available for healthy, mildly affected, moderately affected and chronic mental health needs.

JOE HASSELL
Deputy Chief Fire Officer