

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

14 October 2021

Present:

Councillors Bown (Chair), Clayton (Vice-Chair), Hannaford, Peart and Thomas.

Also in attendance in accordance with Standing Order 39:

Councillor Randall Johnson.

Apologies:

Councillors Best and Brazil.

* **PC/21/7** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that, subject to Minute *PC/21/1 (Minutes) being amended to read:

“**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the former Human Resources Management & Development Committee meeting held on 3 March 2021 be signed as a correct record. **Note:** this Committee replaced the Human Resources Management & Development Committee on 29 June 2021.”

the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2021 be signed as a correct record.

* **PC/21/8** **People Strategy Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (PC/21/6) on progress to date in implementing the approved People Strategy 2019-2022.

In summary, of the 53 initial areas of focus identified in the strategy, all but six were now operating and progressing. The implementation of Pay for Availability (P4A) had secured greater flexibility for on-call contracts. Flexible wholtime contracts had not progressed for several reasons as outlined in the report including:

- limited capacity of the project team;
- the establishment of a National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) “Working Patterns” project to look at, amongst other things, whole-time duty systems. This would, in turn, potentially impact on any Service initiative around, for example, direct entry to support greater diversity in leadership roles;
- the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on cross-sector secondments.

The Service's ambition to address direct entry to support greater diversity in leadership roles had not progressed as this area of work had subsequently emerged as an NFCC initiative. Consequently, the Service would 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.

Due to the impact of Covid-19, the Service ambition to support a range of cross-sector secondments to improve learning and development had not progressed, with the exception of secondments to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and support for the South West Ambulance Services Trust (SWAST).

The Service ambition for braver, positive action practices was equally impacted by Covid-19. Plans for a refreshed approach, featuring the use of an outreach practical assessment vehicle, were currently being revived.

A 'Connecting to Communities' project planned before Covid-19 had been paused but was now being revisited, in particular linking with the renewed approach to prevention work being undertaken by wholetime crews.

These areas would remain an area of focus in the longer term (including the successor People Strategy to be implemented from 2022) and would be informed by the outcomes of the current inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and a workplace review (to include a comprehensive staff survey) to commence in the first quarter of 2022-23.

The Committee received further information on the following areas that had progressed since the previous report:

- **Leadership:** a number of face-to-face, "Leading Conversations" had been held for middle managers across operational and support teams. The sessions featured, amongst other things, discussions on strategic priorities and psychological safety.
- **Inclusion:** work was in progress to integrate the NFCC Core Code of Ethics into the communication and learning strategy. A Fairness and Respect toolkit had been launched, as part of the Fairness and Respect policy, to support staff who may experience, witness or manage bullying and harassment and to provide more data on informal or previously unreported incidents. The "Safe to..." initiative, a multi-layered intervention to support inclusive leadership, positive behaviours and effective teams, continued to be progressed. An Aging Workforce Group had been established to inform actions needed to support retention, succession planning and sustainability in service delivery as part of the next iteration (2022-26) of the People Strategy.
- **Ways of Working:** in addition to the introduction of flexible on-call contracts, a new Workforce Planning Board had been established to review, monitor and plan appropriate actions across stakeholders to forecast and address vacancies and emerging needs in recruitment in support of succession planning and sustainability of service delivery.

- **Learning and Development:** Leadership and Management apprenticeships were underway and a wider Apprenticeship strategy developed to support a cohesive and sustainable approach to utilising levy spend in developing both new starters and existing staff.
- **Health, Safety and Wellbeing:** In addition to the “Safe to...” initiative, a “Just Culture” had been embedded in the Service Health & Safety policy. Foundational learning and engagement with operational management teams was complete and engagement with operational crews was underway. The Service assessment against the National Police Wellbeing Service (Oscar Kilo), a framework of clear statements to ensure has robust and proactive wellbeing provision for employees, had been completed and was awaiting peer review. Additionally, a mental health and well-being intervention framework had been developed to support managers and staff.

* PC/21/9

Performance Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (PC/21/7) on Service performance during April to June 2021 against the following strategic priorities as approved by the Authority at its ordinary meeting on 29 June 2021:

Strategic Priority 3(a): ensure that the workforce is highly trained and has the capability and capacity to deliver services professionally, safely and effectively. Key Performance Indicators associated with this strategic objective and summarised in the report were:

- operational core competence skills (breathing apparatus; incident command; water rescue; working at height/in confined spaces; maritime; driving; and casualty care). The Committee had resolved to monitor at 95% (based on a three-month average) and to request more detail if competency against any core skill fell below this;
- workforce planning (a six-monthly measure on the adequacy of plans to ensure the filling of vacancies with the right candidates);
- health & safety;
- near miss events;
- personal injuries;
- sickness due to accident at work (note, the Service was below average when compared to the national average);
- vehicle incidents;
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR);

- sickness and absence, benchmarked as appropriate against other fire and rescue services and seeking to secure a reduction in quarterly absence figures for short- and long-term sickness. These measures included:
 - shift days lost by sickness for all staff types (benchmarked against other fire and rescue services); and
 - mental health (including stress interventions); and
- fitness testing (measuring of the percentage of operational staff passing the annual fitness test and three-yearly medical).

Strategic Priority 3(b): increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect communities served, promoting inclusion and developing strong and effective leaders who ensure the Service is a fair place to work and where organisational values are a lived experience. Key Performance Indicators associated with this strategic objective and summarised in the report were:

- diversity. An annual measure looking to see a year-on-year increase in relation to:
 - % female staff;
 - % BAME;
 - % Female senior roles;
 - % BAME senior roles;
 - % LGBT senior roles.
- promoting inclusion, developing strong leaders, living the values (including bullying, harassment and discrimination and grievances, capability and disciplinary actions). Associated performance measures were extracted from external (e.g. HMICFRS) and internal staff surveys, working towards a year-on-year improvement.

Strategic Priority 3(c): recognise and maximise the value of all employees, particularly the commitment of on-call firefighters, improving recruitment and retention. Key Performance Indicators associated with this strategic objective were:

- Pay for Availability (P4A) benefits. As P4A was still to be fully implemented, it was intended to have performance metrics linked to its impact on increasing on-call recruitment in due course.
- Employee recruitment and retention. This featured as part of the Annual Diversity report. Consequently, to avoid duplication, it was proposed that this should be removed from the performance report to this Committee.

- Employee engagement. This would measure an increase in participation in both internal and external staff surveys. It was proposed that this should be included in future versions of the annual report.

In debating this report, the following issues were raised:

- that, in the next report, the Committee would expect to see an improvement against water safety core competence given that this was reported at 90.9%. It was acknowledged, though, that the current report indicated the rationale for this, which was expanded on in the meeting together with information being provided on measures to address this;
- that, in reporting near misses, it was important to encourage accurate reporting so as to improve the Service safety culture. An appropriate reporting measure for near misses could, however, be helpful;
- that there would be benefit in having a measures to assess the impact of the introduction of smaller-type appliances on vehicle incidents;
- that future reporting of fitness testing should include only those staff for whom a fitness test was required;
- that a measure be developed to determine the percentage of on-call fire stations for which the Service was aiming to introduce the Pay for Availability contract. It was noted, however, that issues relating to collective agreements meant that the Service was not seeking to mandate the adoption of Pay for Availability for all stations;
- that the RAG rating included in the table summarising all performance against the key indicators for each strategic priority was helpful but could be further improved by an additional “direction of travel” column.

RESOLVED

- (a). that future reports include an annual measure on grievance, capability and discipline;
- (b). that diversity statistics be reported, separately, in an annual report to avoid duplication;
- (c). that a measure regarding Service aspiration for the adoption of the Pay for Availability duty system be developed and reported to the next meeting;
- (d). that the Service Strategic Safety Committee be asked to consider an appropriate measure for reporting on near-misses, with the outcome to be reported to the next Committee meeting; and
- (e). that, subject to (a) to (d) above, the report be noted.

* **PC/21/10** **Application for Retirement and/or Re-employment**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (PC/21/8) on a request for the re-employment (on a zero-hours contract basis; on the same paygrade as prior to retirement, less flexi-officer allowance) of an Area Manager following retirement. This would assist with development of the Community Risk Management Plan 2022-27 and was supported by the Service Executive Board.

The Authority's approved Pay Policy Statement 2021-22 required all requests for re-employment following retirement to be approved by this Committee for Station Manager to Area Manager (or non-uniformed equivalent) posts.

RESOLVED that the request for re-employment following retirement as set out in paragraph 2.3 of report PC/21/8 and summarised above be approved.

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