

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

ITEM: 2

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 15th JUNE 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR : ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT : BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION –
DRAFT PEOPLE STRATEGY

Purpose of Report

1. To allow Members to consider the draft Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) People Strategy with a view to approving it.

Recommended that Members

- [1] Note the content of the report; and
- [2] Approve the People Strategy.

Background

2. The Fire Authority decided that it wished to approve key documents associated with BLC. The People Strategy is a key document which has been the subject of protracted discussions between fire and police staff.
3. Policy Committee considered the draft People Strategy at its meeting on 29th April 2016 and recommended its approval.

Information

4. The draft People Strategy is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
5. Section 2, Principles of the draft People Strategy, contains some important commitments, e.g. to ensure the risk of compulsory redundancies is minimised; to ensure that the approach used to effect change of employer from fire to police is transparent, equitable and fair; and to comply with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).
6. Section 3 of the draft People Strategy provides brief descriptions of important terms associated with staff-related matters. These should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1 of the draft People Strategy, the Outline of the Process for Creating the Joint Corporate Services.

7. Paragraph 3.7 and Appendix 2, Baseline Programme Plan and Transition Schedule of the draft People Strategy, describe the process that is being used to create the Joint Corporate Services. – see in particular the table at Section 5 of Appendix 2 to the draft People Strategy. The process aims to establish the level of demand from fire and police so that the new staffing structures will be adequate to provide the level of service required by fire and police. Fire and police human resources policies (and procedures) are being reviewed with a view to producing policies (and procedures) that will help deliver the commitment to effect change from one employer to another in a transparent, equitable, fair and simple way e.g. these will clarify how competition for posts within the new joint corporate service structures will be handled. These policies (and procedures) will be the subject of consultation with staff, unions and staff associations in the next few months.
8. Paragraph 3.8 and Appendix 2, Baseline Programme Plan and Transition Schedule, of the draft People Strategy, describe the consultation that will be taking place with staff, trade unions and staff associations as the BLC programme develops – see in particular the Transition Schedule on the final page showing the anticipated timing of the consultations.
9. Paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 of the draft People Strategy are both concerned with TUPE. As the name suggests TUPE is intended to provide legal protection to staff that transfer from one employer to another. A new employer can only change terms and conditions in limited circumstances. Any proposed changes must be the subject of consultation and some changes must be agreed by staff before they can be implemented. One change that is an absolute requirement is vetting (see paragraph 3.11 of the draft People Strategy). Anyone accessing non-public areas at Clemonds Hey unsupervised, or accessing police information systems must be vetted. This means that all fire staff that move to Clemonds Hey will need to be successfully vetted (whether they remain fire employees or transfer to the employment of the Chief Constable).
10. Paragraph 3.12 of the draft People Strategy explains the agreed approach to vacancy management. There was a concern that recruitment activity during the BLC programme could create gaps in structures (with fire staff applying for jobs with the police and/or other external jobs). Whilst this has happened for some posts, in order to better manage this risk it has been agreed that fire staff successfully applying for a police post will be encouraged to second across rather than formally take up the post. It is believed that this will provide greater flexibility. Ultimately, fire and police need to manage the filling of vacancies to avoid creating potential redundancies when the BLC programme has been delivered and TUPE takes place.
11. Paragraph 3.14 of the draft People Strategy restates the commitment to minimise compulsory redundancies. Fire staff at greatest risk will be senior managers and staff that fail vetting. However, redeployment opportunities will be explored and those staff will be supported. Although there is reference to

voluntary redundancy opportunities, it is believed that these are likely to be extremely limited.

12. Section 4 of the draft People Strategy outlines the way that information and support to staff will be delivered throughout the BLC programme.

Legal Implications

13. The BLC programme is complex and fire and police need to be satisfied that the people issues associated with it are being handled effectively. A People Strategy helps to inform this requirement provided it is supported by appropriate policies and procedures that fire and police are committed to.

Financial implications

14. This report does not deal with the financial implications of BLC.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. Equality and diversity issues are being considered alongside the People Strategy.

Environmental Implications

16. This report does not deal with environmental implications.