

HMICFRS ACTION PLAN	
Action Plan Progress Report No. 4	Date: November 2020
AFI – PROTECTING THE PUBLIC THROUGH FIRE REGULATION: The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.	
Previous	Current
	
Progress Against Actions	
1	<p>Ensure inspecting officer vacancies are filled within 3 months to prevent cumulative experiential degradation.</p> <p>Increased effort has been made to fill vacancies as quickly as possible. This has predominantly been effective and staffing levels have been good over the last two years. Some posts have been difficult to fill such as maternity cover and one WMB post due to a lack of skilled and qualified applicants. Recent recruitment processes have aimed to identify additional applicants who can be considered for future vacancies if they arise rather than running a full process again.</p> <p>As a result of this process now being embedded within the departmental management practices and the progress that has been made this action has been closed.</p>
2	<p>New Inspectors to be trained to Level 4 Diploma within 24 months.</p> <p>New starters within the department are set the 24 month development target. Most staff are achieving competence within this timeframe. To speed up development and ensure targets are met, courses are being programmed outside of the North West collaborative training agreement due to delays being incurred due to frequency and availability of courses.</p> <p>This has increased training costs for the department above that which was originally bid for and approved.</p> <p>Competence levels within the team are good and this work is now embedded within departmental management processes and the action has been closed.</p>
3	<p>Skills, recruitment, retention and succession planning to be specifically considered in departmental review.</p> <p>A full review report has been completed and recommendations have been proposed in relation to recruitment, retention and succession and includes a revised structure proposal.</p> <p>Due to the delay in the implementation of major changes to the Protection landscape as a result of the Grenfell investigations, the review was not able to fully consider the implications of either the Hackitt review outcomes or the Inquiry outcomes and this delayed completion.</p>

	<p>Further work took place to develop interim recommendations and a structure which would enable some changes to take place whilst allowing for future flexibility to address any Grenfell related changes.</p> <p>Government Grant funding was received in August 2020 and additional work has taken place to consider the best use of this alongside the review outcomes in relation to recruitment, retention and succession.</p> <p>An SMT paper proposing a revised structure was approved in October. This proposal seeks to put in place a structure to improve recruitment, retention and succession. Work is now underway with representative bodies to consult on the proposals. Action Closed.</p>
4	<p>Department and individual targets to be reviewed to ensure they are achievable taking in to account a vacancy factor.</p> <p>Individual annual targets of 120 audits per competent TFSO and 60 per WM have been applied which in theory would exceed the previous annual target. These were set in consultation with teams. Audit outturn is around 73% of establishment capacity due to the lack of competence in parts of the team at any given time.</p> <p>The organisational KPI for 'Fire safety audits in non-domestic premises' was agreed to be revised from Q3 of 19/20 to be more suitable and appropriate. From Q3 reporting of this target will be shown as the number of audits achieved against the number we have capacity to undertake. In 2019/20 performance improved compared to the same period in the previous year and is still significantly higher than the national average and completion of the RBIP was on track.</p> <p>In 202/21 performance has been impacted by C19 as would be expected however the applied revised targets and approach mean that this action is now completed.</p>
5	<p>Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to be reviewed.</p> <p>An initial review of the RBIP was carried out and this led to revised inspection frequencies across a number of premises types. This was incorporated in to the 2019/20 RBIP. This led to an increase in the number of RBIP visits per year.</p> <p>After completing this initial review it was felt that a more detailed RBIP review was necessary to fundamentally review the way the RBIP is derived and to ensure it provides assurance to the Fire Authority in a number of areas. This detailed review has been included as an objective within the 2020-24 IRMP. As this is a complex piece of work a PID has been developed and delivery will now be tracked by the normal project scrutiny processes.</p> <p>Due to the initial review being completed and new inspection frequencies being implemented this action is now closed.</p>

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AFI – MAKING BEST USE OF RESOURCES

The service should ensure there is effective monitoring, review and evaluation of the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>Develop a clear CFRS Collaboration Strategy that will inform collaboration activity in future.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Utilise the Partnership Toolkit as guidance and practice for all new collaborations.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
3	<p>Sense check, review and evaluate exiting collaborations by using the Partnership Toolkit or other appropriate method / process</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of December 2020.</p>
4	<p>Embed the process of collaboration by communicating and providing training where necessary for all staff.</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of December 2020.</p>
5	<p>Review the status of each collaboration regularly and continue to gather the evidence to support this.</p> <p>First report to SMT due in January 2021.</p>
6	<p>Update the Collaboration Register to include collaborations that are not considered to be 'key'</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of March 2021.</p>

Update

The AFI is concerned with 'any' collaboration (a term that is not defined).

The Service is involved in a significant amount of collaborative activity. This ranges from complex collaborations, like North West Fire Control, to more modest collaborations, like allowing PCSOs to be based in some of our fire stations. The Service acknowledges that it should be able to provide evidence of monitoring, review etc. However, the amount of effort involved must be commensurate with the type of collaborative activity.

The Service already had a Partnership Toolkit that was in use in the Prevention Department. It contained some good templates concerned with the different stages of a collaborative activity. However, it was not used throughout the Service.

The Fire Authority approved a Collaboration Strategy in February 2020.

Some work was carried out to check that the Partnership Toolkit complemented the Collaboration Strategy, but further work is required to update the Toolkit and promote its use more widely within the Service.

The Service decided to focus on 'key' collaborations. It had 13 key collaborations. A table was produced and populated with information about the monitoring, review, evaluation and benefits of the collaborations. This table has been used to formalise the requirements for monitoring and review where they did not already exist. Relevant reports etc. are now programmed into the annual cycle of meetings of officers and/or Members.

Other collaborations (that were not considered to be 'key') will be considered as time allows. An action has been added relating to the updating of the Collaboration Register.

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AFI – MAKING BEST USE OF RESOURCES

The service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place to secure the right level of savings in the medium term by widening its scenario planning and testing for future financial forecasting

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>Revise the budget setting process and methodology incorporating broader scenario planning and implement Priority Based Budgeting (PBB).</p> <p>The PBB process has been completed, amendments made and services marked by senior managers to set the priorities. This has enabled funding allocations to be linked to priority areas going forward. Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Develop plans to achieve the saving forecasts in the Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>The MTFP was approved by the Fire Authority on 12th February 2020. We are monitoring savings for 2020/21. Action Closed</p>
3	<p>Complete Whole Service Review</p> <p>The WSR was completed during the last 18-months and involved extensive consultation and collaboration with staff and stakeholders. The WSR followed our Community Risk Management (CRM) principles to prioritise resources to risk. It also dovetailed into the new Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) process so that it provided a range of options to meet differing financial scenarios. Some of the outcomes and proposals from the WSR are included within the draft 2020-24 IRMP which was approved by the Fire Authority on 1st July 2020. A range of options (not included in the IRMP) are on a reserve list should they be required to meet financial scenarios that could arise over the life of the MTFP. Action Closed.</p>
4	<p>Review other Services' HMICFRS reports as published to identify notable practice</p> <p>A review has taken place of other HMICFRS reports and of Cheshire Constabulary's approach to future financial forecasting. The Constabulary received an outstanding grading in this area. Therefore, it has been agreed to adopt the Constabulary's best practice and use the Priority Based Budgeting process which is designed to prioritise resource allocation to risks and business need within a range of financial scenarios. This has resulted in a ranked listing for resources and proposals relative to the overall financial plan and priorities. Action Closed.</p>

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AFI – MAKING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AFFORDABLE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE: The service needs to demonstrate sound financial management of principal non-pay costs. It should use benchmarking data more widely and effectively.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>For the Joint Corporate Procurement Team to develop relationships and engage with National Procurement activity to ensure that all purchasing decisions are well informed.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Continue to engage with North West services on procurement efforts wherever appropriate.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
3	<p>Continue to work with Joint Corporate Procurement Team to make sure they can plan ahead for CFRS requirements to enable it to benefit from collaborative procurement activity.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
4	<p>Gather evidence to demonstrate how CFRS ensures Value for Money and be clear in the information we provide.</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of March 2021</p>
5	<p>Record the process used to benchmark our procurement.</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of March 2021</p>

Update

The AFI is concerned with 'principal non-pay costs'. An additional paragraphs states that benchmarking data should be used more effectively. A paragraph from the report states, 'We saw evidence of benchmarking, comparing the procurement of some goods and services, but it was not systematic for all non-pay costs.'

Whether it is realistic to benchmark 'all' non-pay costs remains to be seen.

The initial focus of our activity was concerned with the range and proportion of collaborative procurements undertaken. By this we were interested primarily with the relationship between CFRS-only procurements and collaborative procurements. Collaborative procurements included: CFRS working with other organisations to procure goods/services, e.g. Cheshire Police, NW Fire and Rescue Services and the use of existing framework contract arrangements, e.g. NW Construction Hub. The vast majority of procurements that involved

significant expenditure were collaborative procurements. This was evidenced in some work carried out by the procurement team.

There was an existing document used by the procurement team that was enhanced so that it noted the procurement options that had been considered. This document is supplied to CFRS when a contract is presented for signature.

The Head of Procurement was encouraged to engage with North West procurement colleagues and with the NFCC Fire Commercial Transformation Programme. This helps ensure that all options are considered and encourages further collaborative procurement.

Value for money is not just about benchmarking – it is about the overall costs of goods and services, including the expense of the procurement exercise, which can be considerable. A framework contract can give a quick and cheap route to market. In reality CFRS could not carry out all of its purchasing without the benefit of collaborative procurement – it is not sufficiently resourced.

It has been difficult to secure benchmarking data – indeed it is some years since the Government has carried out its 'basket of goods' exercise for fire and rescue services. Last time this happened CFRS (along with the North West fire and rescue services that it often works with) was shown in a favourable light. Further effort is being made to secure worthwhile benchmarking data.

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AFI - PROMOTING THE RIGHT VALUES AND CULTURE:

The service should assure itself that staff understand and have confidence in the purpose and integrity of wellbeing policies, especially sickness.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>Undertake review of attendance management policy and the application of the processes associated with the policy with specific focus on terminology and language to achieve a more compassionate tone.</p> <p>The review of the Attendance Management policy is complete and has been aligned directly with the Service's core value of "Act with Compassion".</p> <p>Guidance for Managers and Staff has been developed and have been launched in conjunction with a series of HR Roadshows for Attendance Management and Wellbeing. The roadshow which is being done in conjunction with the Mental Health Advisor will provide the necessary clarity and upskilling of both staff and managers regarding the application of the updated attendance management policy.</p> <p>The roadshow commenced in October and it is expected that by the end of January 2021 all station watches and departments will have received a virtual visit. This roadshow was originally intended to commence in May 2020 but was delayed due to COVID-19 and required changes to the policy and documentation to reflect new arrangements relating to the pandemic.</p> <p>Due to be completed by end of January 2021.</p>
2	<p>Incorporate Attendance Management into Step Up Leadership Programme and as part of supervisory induction to embed the process within CFRS</p> <p>This action is complete with plans in place for attendance and wellbeing to become themes on the current and all future cohorts of the Step Up programme and the new Step into Leadership induction programme. Action Closed.</p>
3	<p>Develop and launch communications plan to highlight positive/ supportive aspects of attendance management and wellbeing within CFRS</p> <p>The need to have robust communication to raise understanding and to solicit feedback around attendance and wellbeing has been actioned in various ways, some of which are outlined under objectives 1 and 2.</p> <p>Communications around wellbeing has become more prevalent and regular articles and guidance is placed on the intranet and there is a dedicated regular feature on wellbeing in the monthly Alert magazine. Further plans have been developed to duplicate last years service wide focus on International Mental Health Day, and quarterly themed podcasts and campaigns have been scheduled to coincide with national events and tributes to a range of wellbeing themes.</p>

	<p>Feedback has been solicited from staff around wellbeing and attendance via the staff survey and the staff engagement forum, coupled with the establishment of a mental health steering group to monitor and raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing across the service.</p> <p>It is considered that whilst this is an ongoing action, this can be closed for purposes of this action plan.</p>
4	<p>Create new post of Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor (MHWA) and appoint appropriately qualified person to role.</p> <p>Recruited and commenced 8.07.19. Action Closed.</p>
5	<p>Introduction of Wellbeing impact assessments on all business cases and project proposals for change that involve staff.</p> <p>A Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been developed which will be reviewed by SMT in December 2020. Once approved this will be incorporated into all future business cases and proposals for change to ensure that the wellbeing needs of staff are considered.</p>
6	<p>Review the amended duties programme of activities for staff on restricted duties.</p> <p>To ensure that all staff are able to undertake meaningful work during periods of restricted duties a log will be reviewed on a monthly basis at Attendance Management. In addition a process has been put in place for pregnant staff. HR liaise with the Equality and Inclusion Officer who will put forward proposals for discussion and approval at the monthly attendance management meeting. This process has not been required largely due to COVID-19 and the need for pregnant employees to be shielded.</p>
7	<p>Review other Services' HMICFRS reports as published to identify and implement notable practice.</p> <p>Discussions have been held with Merseyside FRS and Lancashire FRS in respect of HMIC assessments with focus on Lancashire's outstanding HMIC assessment in respect of culture. Contact has also been made with Derbyshire FRS who have achieved a national award and Cheshire Constabulary who have also won a national wellbeing award. This has resulted in a scoping exercise to determine the value of adopting the College of Policing wellbeing assessment tool – Oskar Kilo which is an example of notable practice.</p>

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AFI - PROMOTING THE RIGHT VALUES AND CULTURE:

The service should take early action, such as monitoring overtime, to improve the wellbeing of staff

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>Review the monitoring arrangements for overtime for all staff and implement any revised arrangements.</p> <p>Additional communication reiterating the working time guidance has being produced and communicated via the green bulletin, with personal letters to employees declaring secondary employment.</p> <p>New overtime monitoring arrangements are in place for all day duty and flexi duty roles up to and including group manager.</p> <p>Overtime monitoring is supported at station level through a Working Time Directive training (WTD) package which incorporates fatigue management guidance. The amount of overtime worked is reviewed by Station Managers as part of the Station Management Framework.</p> <p>A log for all wholtime staff has been set up on HR system. The system allows the Service to identify any staff who are found to be exceeding an average of 48 hours per week over the reference period. If this is the case conversations are taking place with line managers and being logged. Further work to identify coding anomalies is taking place.</p> <p>Further revisions are being made to the working time policy. The policy now includes additional fatigue management guidance for all duty systems.</p>
2	<p>Provide training on the monitoring and risks of fatigue.</p> <p>WTD and fatigue management E learning package launched. The package has been completed by 97% of staff as of 22/9/20.</p> <p>Steve Barnes/Alex Waller briefed SM's and GM's in November 2019 in relation to their role managing fatigue across the Service. Action Closed.</p>
3	<p>Review other Services' HMICFRS reports as published to identify and implement notable practice.</p> <p>As well as reviewing other FRS's reports, we are engaging across the North West Service Delivery Managers.</p> <p>Neil Griffiths, Head of Service Delivery has been appointed as the Chair for the NFCC On Call Practitioners Group. Action Closed.</p>

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AFI - PROMOTING THE RIGHT VALUES AND CULTURE:

The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible to act as role models by demonstrating their commitment to service values through their behaviours.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>CFO to undertake visits to all operational watches on an individual watch basis and visits to all non operational team.</p> <p>The CFO completed these visits but has continued with a cycle of programmed visits with the intention of visiting every watch and department at least once a year. Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Programme of Principal Officers' visits to all watches and teams developed for 2019/2020.</p> <p>As above but these are also conducted via Skype and will continue as business as usual. Action Closed</p>
3	<p>Programme of visits to all watches and teams developed for SMT, Group and Station Managers for 2019/2020.</p> <p>A programme of visits was completed in 2019/20 however, a programme of future visits for the Group and Station Managers is to be arranged prior to closure of this action.</p>
4	<p>Programmed "back to the floor" activity by POs, SMT & GMs to work closely with teams throughout the service and experience the day to day issues faced by the teams a minimum of 2 days per year.</p> <p>Completed and based on success has been incorporated as an annual event. Dates were arranged for 2020 but planned activity has been impacted due to COVID-19. This will be revisited with dates during 2021. Action Closed</p>
5	<p>Creation of informal interaction opportunities with staff to build trust and improve relationships.</p> <p>Completed and this practice has been incorporated into recognition policy to embed and ensure retirees are given opportunity to enjoy a meaningful presentation at point of retirement. In most cases over the last year a Principal Officer has attended a retirement presentation.</p> <p>A member of SMT always attends station open days. Action Closed</p>

6	<p>Introduce a staff conference for non managerial staff in the service to improve engagement and promote feedback.</p> <p>Four staff conferences were held during 2020 prior to the pandemic outbreak. Future dates will be agreed on an annual basis and included on the corporate calendar as business as usual. Action Closed</p>
7	<p>Review the core values to ensure fit for purpose and reflect the future aspirations of the service.</p> <p>A comprehensive review of the service’s core values was undertaken between Summer 2019 and Spring 2020. This involved a series of workshops with staff utilising a “Values Game” to prompt discussion and identify the themes that were important to staff. Following development of a number of proposals based directly on staff feedback, a service wide survey was launched and the service liaised with staff, rep bodies and members to agree the final core values.</p> <p>The new core values have been publicised widely and are visible in all stations and in busy traffic areas within Sadler Road and at HQ. A communications campaign was launched using the intranet and the Alert and work is ongoing to include the core values within corporate publications and the new 2021 appraisal scheme. Action Closed</p>
8	<p>Review and update technology as required to promote and support agile working.</p> <p>All managers now have the capability to work remotely at any location.</p> <p>All aspects of agile working and use of technology have been tested thoroughly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Action Closed</p>
9	<p>Review other Services’ HMICFRS reports as published to identify and implement notable practice.</p> <p>HMICFRS outcomes and notable practices discussed within regional HR meetings and within the NFCC people forum. Action Closed</p>

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Date:
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AFI - ENSURING FAIRNESS AND PROMOTING DIVERSITY:

The service should ensure that leaders can demonstrate that they act on and have made changes as a direct result of feedback from staff.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>All locations will have suitable technology to allow for two-way communication. This will enable a variety of interactions between teams, e.g. briefing sessions, question and answer sessions, training sessions, virtual meetings etc. It should reduce some travel and have an environmental benefit.</p> <p>Video Conferencing technology has now been installed at all Fire Stations and has been utilised regularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has enabled improved communication with, and between, teams and individuals during the pandemic and has also been used for group and individual training sessions.</p> <p>The technology is expected to be upgraded during 2020-21. Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Improve 'you said – we did' communications to ensure they are sustainable and remembered by using communication tools that will deliver the required outcomes e.g. quarterly poster/alert article.</p> <p>Communications in the form of a "You Said – We Did" have been published via the Alert, the Green and the Intranet which have included the results of the staff survey and Covid-19 survey. The Firehouse has also provided a further avenue to respond and close feedback loops. Action Closed</p>
3	<p>Development of visit feedback mechanism at all levels to ensure issues; feedback is acted upon and reported against.</p> <p>Heightened emphasis has been placed on ensuring that where staff provide feedback, explanation is provided in respect of suggestions being actioned or not actioned.</p> <p>This has been done directly in many cases by members of SMT during watch and departmental visits and the Chief engages and responds directly with the Staff Engagement Forum on a monthly basis. Feedback has also been actioned organically through other structures such as the Staff Engagement Steering Group, and the Firebook online forum.</p> <p>This is now a standing agenda item on the monthly Staff Engagement Forum meetings. Action Closed</p>
4	<p>Review other Services' HMICFRS reports as published to identify and implement notable practice.</p> <p>Since the E&D Officer took up position, he has networked with several equivalents in other FRSs to identify areas of good practice. He also now sits on the NFCC EDI Working Group to further shape developments on a national level. Action Closed</p>

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AFI - ENSURING FAIRNESS AND PROMOTING DIVERSITY:

The service should improve communications between staff and senior managers, so queries and suggestions are responded to in a timely and appropriate way.

Previous



Current



Progress Against Actions

1	<p>Undertaken a survey to evaluate the communications methodology across the service and identify improvements.</p> <p>Following survey feedback, the Green and Alert have been redesigned as electronic publications. The design and content of the Alert has been further redeveloped using feedback from the Staff Engagement Forum.</p> <p>Posters detailing communications SPOCs have been distributed to stations. Action Closed</p>
2	<p>Involving staff at all levels to contribute to strategic issues and change.</p> <p>A second Staff Engagement Forum has been recruited and has a cycle of meetings to consider topical subjects. The resulting action plan will be considered by SMT for feedback through its development. Outcomes will be reported to Fire Authority in April 2021. Action Closed</p>
3	<p>To develop a feedback process to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable feedback from staff / handle staff suggestions and ideas • Ensure that staff understand/appreciate what has/has not been done in relation to suggestions that have been made. • Ensure results are published for transparency. • Establish as a key part of regular communications with timescales for progress/resolution. This should ensure matters are pursued in a timely manner. <p>Designs for a new staff suggestions scheme have been considered in the Staff Engagement Forum, with a paper due to be presented to SMT in November 2020.</p> <p>The intranet has been updated during Covid-19 to include an online forum (The FireBook); a two-way forum where staff can suggest ideas and these are then considered and timely responses are provided by senior managers.</p>
4	<p>Improve methods of communication between staff and senior managers in respect of reward and recognition.</p> <p>Ensure senior managers are involved in the provision of meaningful and timely recognition.</p> <p>Senior Managers have worked hard to ensure that staff feel valued and that timely recognition is a priority which has been done via enhanced visibility and regular PO</p>

	<p>briefings thanking staff for their contributions. All newly promoted staff are invited to attend a lunch with SMT to congratulate them and more meaningful recognition has been developed for retiring staff with senior management involvement.</p> <p>A Staff Engagement Steering Group was established in 2019 to review survey feedback and to improve methods of communication between staff and senior managers in respect of reward and recognition. This group has been responsible for the issue of local recognition budgets to reward staff for outstanding work and meets to discuss reward and recognition every 8 weeks.</p> <p>The STAR Awards have been redesigned to encourage peer to peer nomination and involve a peer-led judging panel with additional letters of congratulation to individual staff from the Chief Fire Officer.</p> <p>During the pandemic senior management visibility has been maintained via a programme of Skype visits and regular principal officer briefings thanking staff for their contributions. Family members have been included in the gratitude with personalised letters to children from the Chief Fire Officer and the development of a thank you video for staff. All staff were afforded two days extra leave during 2020 in acknowledgement of the hard work and work is ongoing in respect of developing recognition programmes that will help to attract and retain on call staff.</p> <p>Action is classed as business as usual but closed for purposes of this action plan.</p>
5	<p>Use the Green and Alert more productively and ensure all retirees have the opportunity to attend a personalised retirement function with family, colleagues and a Principal Officer.</p> <p>The retirement policy has been updated to enhance the value and flexibility of gift options for retiring staff and all retirements are published in the Alert. More personal retirement presentations have been incorporated into business as usual. Action Closed</p>
6	<p>Specific and targeted group newsletters e.g. Land and Stations. This will be managed by a communications representative from each of the groups to produce a (time driven – monthly/bimonthly/quarterly) newsletter for all staff.</p> <p>Regular communications have been published on the intranet and through the Green/Alert to provide updates on the progress of building programmes. Action Closed</p>