

Report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Director of Response and Protection

Update from the Joint Consultative Committee

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Committee of the activities of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) since the last update provided on 2 December 2020.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the following new and existing items currently under discussion by the Joint Consultative Committee be noted:

- (i) Occupational Health provider***
- (ii) HMICFRS Inspection and Cause of Concern***
- (iii) Policies***
- (iv) Job Evaluation***
- (v) 12 Hour Day Duty System trial at Hereford Fire Station***
- (vi) Standardising promotion processes***

Background

2. The JCC acts as the main route for formal employee consultation. It consists of managers and employee representatives who meet every six weeks to discuss issues of mutual interest. The JCC is not a decision making body.
3. Employees are represented on JCC by members from each of the Representative Bodies (RBs) in Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, namely the FBU, FOA, FRSA and Unison.
4. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer who is currently responsible for industrial relations. Other management representatives include the Assistant Directors/Area Commanders responsible for Protection, Prevention, Response and Assets, as well as the Head of HR and Development.

Update

5. The Joint Protocol for Industrial Relations SPI provides the framework for communicating, consulting and negotiating with all Trade Unions.

6. Following a review of how the JCC operates, all new items raised at JCC meetings are now categorised under one of the following headings thus enabling a more structured flow of information between management and RBs:
- For consultation
 - For negotiation
 - Service Policy and Instructions (SPI) undergoing formal consultation
 - Items for Information/Updates for TU Reps
 - Requests for information/Issues raised by TU Reps
 - Other Items
7. Since its last update to the Committee, the JCC has met on 8 occasions – 6 January 2021, 25 February 2021, 1 April 2021, 6 May 2021, 17 June 2021, 22 July 2021, 9 September 2021 and 11 October.

New Issues under discussion since the last Update

8. New key issues that have been discussed are as follows:

9. Occupational Health Provider

A new contract with Heales Medical commenced on 1 September. Communications have been issued to staff via the Service Bulletin on a regular basis leading into the transition away from the previous provider. Every member of staff was contacted regarding their personal medical information and how the transfer process would be carried out.

10. HMICFRS Inspection and Cause of Concern

The Prevention Cause of Concern Action Plan has now been finalised with everyone at JCC having had sight of it. The HMICFRS Liaison Lead and the Assistant Director for Prevention are now holding regular monthly meetings. The internal Prevention Improvement Panel now meets to discuss issues every other week linked to addressing the concern. The Prevention Improvement Panel are now looking at all factors and providing regular updates to Audit & Standards Committee and the Senior Management Board. The full inspection report will be release later on this year.

11. Policies

The main focus over the coming months in terms of policies is currently as follows:

1. Attendance Management SPI (draft currently being finalised) – this has been delayed by the implementation of the Occupational Health contract.
2. Capability SPI (draft currently being finalised)
3. Fitness SPI (being progressed by the H&S Working Group).

12. Job Evaluation

The Assistant Director for Prevention advised JCC a final report has now been received from the external consultant with recommendations for the Service to consider. The Head of HR & Development has shared the report with Unison with additional meetings booked to discuss next steps.

13. 12 Hour Day Duty System trial at Hereford Fire Station

The Assistant Director for Response advised that a report has been received from managers based at Hereford who are enjoying working the revised duty pattern. Work is now underway between Representative Bodies and managers to finalise and agree the variation to the duty pattern in policy.

14. Standardising Promotion Processes

The Resourcing Manager is finalising a draft framework for managers in terms of promotions for Green Book staff with principles for consideration against the current Grey Book principles. The Head of HR & Development and Resourcing Manager are due to update Unison regarding the outcome in the coming weeks.

Previous Issues under Discussion

15. Lateral Flow Testing for COVID

Following a decision made on 25 March 2021, confirmatory Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing has now been re-introduced. Consequently, should a member of staff test positive from any lateral flow test, they would also take a follow-up PCR test as soon as possible. Home testing kits will be provided going forward, however is proving challenging at this time.

16. Long COVID

A guidance paper was made available on SharePoint for those individuals (and their managers) who may be suffering from Long COVID.

17. HMI Inspection

The HMI Inspection commenced on 12 April with the same footprint as the previous inspection. It lasted for a period of six weeks and was mainly carried out online and remotely by the Inspectors. A Strategic Briefing was held with SMB and the FRA Chairman on Tuesday 20 April. Additionally, a staff survey was carried out to support the audit and closed on 29 April.

18. PPL

It was noted that Place Partnership Limited (PPL) ceased trading on 31 March; therefore from 1 April, HWFRS have entered into a Service Level Agreement with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). There has been a transition period as work commences with the OPCC Estates Team; however, new systems have been in operation since 1 April which replace the existing PPL contact centre and associated processes.

19. Debriefs for Disciplinarys, Grievances, Capability Processes

Debriefs are now being held following all significant disciplinary cases, grievances or capability processes in order to establish any learning points or areas for improvement.

20. Fitness Policy

Due to the COVID pandemic, it has been a challenging task trying to train the Level 3 Fitness trainers who will support our staff in maintaining their fitness levels to meet the required standards. HR are liaising with the provider to review other options with the University of Worcester continuing to carry out COVID fitness testing on stations.

Conclusion

21. The Policy and Resources Committee has responsibility to monitor and review staffing matters discussed by the JCC and as such is required to receive regular reports on these matters. This report provides Members with an update on the current issues under discussion with employee representatives.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	None
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications)	The JCC forum links to the successful discharge of the People Strategy.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores)	None
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Consultation has been carried out on all significant policy changes as per service procedures. In addition, managers are consulted regarding COVID 19 issues via the COVID 19 Response Group, along with SMB.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	All significant policy changes are fully supported by EIAs.