



Classification	Official		
Meeting	Service Leadership Team	Agenda no.	7a
	Performance and Resources		14
Meeting Date	30 April 2024		
	20 May 2024		
Report Authors	Hannah Phipps, Head of Employment Policy & Practice		
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Subject	Working Well Together Quarter 4 2023-24 Update		
Type of Report	Information		
Action Point No.	N/A	For Publication	Yes

RECOMMENDATION(S)

None. This report is for information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A quarterly report is produced for the Service Leadership Team (SLT) to provide a snapshot of the engagement and consultation with the recognised trade union representatives since the launch of this way of working. This report covers Quarter 4 2023-2024.

This report provides an update on the headline topics from the policy schedule, any failures to agree, ops committee meetings and other associated activity where there has been the biggest change since the previous report.

Overall, during Q4 2023-2024 a total of 5 People Policies were published, 3 People Policies were reviewed and processes updated due to legislative changes or local agreements. A further 2 People Policies received verbal agreement and will be published upon receipt of written agreement during Q1 2024-2025. 2 Operational Policies were agreed during Q4 2023-2024.

BACKGROUND

Our current approach was created as the output of workshops that we held with each of the representative bodies. It is intended to complement our formal mechanism – the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC). The schedule of consultation involves seeking acceptable solutions to problems through a genuine exchange of views and information.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

1. Policies, guidance and updates Published and implementation activity during Q4 2023-2024:

1.1 Legislative Changes:

The 6 April sees a number of legislative changes: Carer's leave, pregnancy and family leave redundancy protection, paternity leave amendments and flexible working rights. Our policies were reviewed during Q4 2023-2024 and updated where necessary. The changes made are summarised below:

Review: The Carer's Leave Regulations 2024 will provide employees with the right to one week's unpaid leave during any 12 month period to provide or arrange care for a dependent who has a long-term care need. There is no qualifying period of service. Our Service already has this provision within the **Special Leave Policy** but Civica has been updated to include a new absence code called 'Carers Leave Unpaid'.

Review: The Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Shared Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 extend the period of time during which employees who are pregnant or have taken maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave are entitled to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy if they would otherwise be made redundant. Consideration will be given when dealing with organisational change under the **Organisational Change Policy**.

Updated Policy Published: The Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 bring greater flexibility for parents and adopters exercising their rights to two weeks' statutory paternity leave and will apply where the expected week of birth, the expected date of placement for adoption, or the expected date of entry into Great Britain for adoption, is on or after 6 April 2024. The **Paternity Leave Policy** has been updated to include the following changes:

- Employees will be able to take their entitlement, as either a single two-week block or two separate one-week blocks;
- the period in which paternity leave must be taken is extended to 52 weeks after the birth or adoption placement (previously it was 56 days); and
- notice of entitlement to take paternity leave must be given in or before the 15th week before the expected week of birth, followed by at least 28 days' notice of each period of leave.

Updated Policy Published: Under the Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023 and the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 the following changes will come into effect on 6 April 2024. The **Flexible Working Policy** has been updated to include the following changes:

- Allow colleagues to make two statutory flexible working requests every 12 months (the current limit is one).
- The right to request flexible working will become a day-one right, with no qualifying period of service required.
- Employees will be able to make two requests in any 12-month period, rather than one which is the case now.
- Employees will no longer have to explain what effect they consider their requested change would have on the employer and how the effect might be dealt with.

- Requests will not be able to be refused without consultation with the employee.
- Requests will need to be considered and a decision made within two months of receiving the request, rather than three months as is the case now.

1.2 Other People Policy changes and allowance updates:

Review: **Subsistence Rates and Pre-Arranged Out Duties (PAOD) Allowance** have been updated as per our local agreement, the new rates have been updated in the **Expenses Policy (Appendix Expense Rates)**.

Updated Policy Published: A **Green Book Overtime Policy** was consulted upon and agreed during Phase 20. There are no changes to our current practice and this policy reflects the National Joint Council for Local Government Services the 'Green Book'.

Updated Policy Published: The **Quality Assurance Policy** was consulted upon during Phase 19 and published during Q4 2023-2024.

Updated Policy Published: The **Core Skills Assurance Policy** was consulted upon during Phase 19 and published during Q4 2023-2024.

Policies Agreed Pending Publication: **Secondary Employment and Surveillance Policy** were consulted upon during Phase 18 and verbal agreement reached during Q4 2023-2024. Awaiting written confirmation before this policy is published during Q1 2024-2025.

Ops Policies:

- Drone Policy/Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) has been launched during Q4 2023-2024.
- Smokey Paws, agreement reached, further consultation required on the training programme before it is published.

2. In consultation during Quarter 4 2023-2024:

2.1. Phase 19 (Launched 20th November 2023 – Ended 12th January 2024):

Item	Consultation Outcome	Next Steps
Improved Performance/Capability Policy	UNISON, FOA and FRSA agreed. FBU provided feedback.	Toolkits, flowcharts to be agreed with TUs.
Expenses Policy	FOA and FRSA agreed. FBU provided feedback. Subsistence rates and ceasing petty cash.	x2 evidence gathering exercises completed with very few receipts. Meeting with PS Tax and FBU 18/04/24 to discuss next steps.
Redeployment	UNISON, FOA and FRSA agreed. FBU provided feedback.	Head of Resourcing & Recruitment providing alternative wording.

DBS Policy	UNISON, FOA and FRSA agreed. FBU provided feedback.	Pending Service formal response (see DBS section of this report).
Quality Assurance	Agreed by all TUs.	Published during Q4 2023-2024
Core Skills Assurance Programme	Agreed by all TUs.	Published during Q4 2023-2024

Negotiation – USAR Reservist Contract - negotiations have closed however negotiation discussions have prompted a need to recalculate alternative options and resubmit SLT paper for decision before new proposal negotiated.

2.2. Phase 20 (Lunched 29th January 2024 – Ended 8th March 2024):

Item	Consultation Outcome	Next Steps
Appraisal Policy	UNISON, FOA, FRSA – agreed. FBU – no response.	Awaiting return of Brigade Secretary from A/L.
Crewing Policy	Progress has stalled due to availability of the policy lead.	Escalated to AM & ACFO to support as a priority.
Electric Vehicle Charging Point Policy	UNISON, FOA, FRSA – agreed. FBU – no response.	Awaiting return of Brigade Secretary from A/L.
Overtime Policy (Green Book)	UNISON & FRSA – agreement reached.	Published during Q4 2023-2024
Smoking in the Workplace	UNISON, FOA, FRSA – agreed. FBU – no response.	Awaiting return of Brigade Secretary from A/L.
Fitness Policy	FOA agreed. FRSA failed to agree. FBU – no response.	Awaiting return of Brigade Secretary from A/L.
Ops Policy		
Item	Consultation Outcome	Next Steps
Helmet Markings	FOA reserve the position, FRSA failed to agree. FBU agree in principle (P1 not to be on the fire ground).	Ops Policy providing further guidance to clarify usage. Extraordinary JNCC to be scheduled for FRSA.
Ten Second Triage	FOA reserve the position, FRSA agree. FBU failure to agree.	Extraordinary JNCC 18/03/24.
Unwanted Fire Signals	FOA agreed. FRSA reserve the position. FBU failure to agree.	Extraordinary JNCC 18/03/24.
Wildfire Plan	FOA agreed, FRSA agreed. FBU awaiting decision.	Discussed further with FBU at OCM 25/03/24. Awaiting FBU decision.

Marauding Terrorist Policy	FOA agreed. FRSA agreed. FBU failure to agree.	Extraordinary JNCC 18/03/24.
Fog Spikes	FOA agreed. FRSA agreed. FBU no response.	Discussed further with FBU at OCM 25/03/24. Awaiting FBU decision.

2.3. Phase 21 (Launched 25th March 2024 – Due to End 17th May 2024):

To help facilitate consultation a mid-phase consultation session will be held on the 23/04/24 for the FBU to meet with Service leads. It is hoped that this improve engagement, provide focus and ensure timelines are met.

- Protection – Training Development Policy
- Drivers Licence Checking Policy
- Flexi Officer Leave
- Ops Policy
- Chlorine OIN
- Gerda Doors OIN
- P2FF driving (SLT Paper)
- FB244 Form

3. Outstanding Items from Previous Phases held prior to Q4 2023-2024:

Item	Consultation Outcome	Next Steps
Whistleblowing, Complements & Complaints Policy (Phase 17)	All TUs agreed. Decision sheet submitted to PFCC. Amendments requested.	Being re-submitted to next Strategic Board for PFCC to sign decision sheet.
Working Time Regulations (Phase 18)	UNISON, FOA and FRSA agreed. FBU provided feedback and paper submitted to SLT.	Awaiting SLT decision re Service's position on daily rest breaks before responding to FBU.

4. Failure to Agree Update

The **Annual Leave Policy** reached a Failure to Agree from the FBU and an Extraordinary JNCC was held on 05/10/23. A meeting has been scheduled for the 23/04/24 for CFO and FBU to discuss Failure to Agree (not the corporate level hearing).

During Q4 2023-2024 the following three Operational Policies reached a Failure to Agree from the FBU and an Extraordinary JNCC meeting was held on the 18/03/24:

- Unwanted Fire Signals
- Marauding Terrorist Policy
- Ten Second Triage

5. Ops Committee Meeting (OCM):

An Operations Committee Meeting was held on the 29th January 2024 and 25th March 2024. Operational policies consulted upon during Q2 2023-2024 are set out above.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

We have a shared vision and are clear about our Service aspirations, representative body priorities nationally and locally, delivery of priorities within the Fire and Rescue Plan (which are reflected in the annual plan), staff survey and HMICFRS feedback. We have a shared understanding of different perspectives, agreement on amendments to plans if needed and/or appropriate.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

As set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan

- Promoting a positive culture in the workplace
- Be transparent, open, and accessible
- Make best use of our resources

As well as the following Service Values

- Value the contribution of all
- Always professional
- Work as one team

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications associated with this paper.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications associated with this paper.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

No staffing implications associated with this paper.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The actions being taken will not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics (as defined within the Equality Act 2010), when compared to all other individuals and will not disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

Race	Y/N	Religion or belief	Y/N
Sex	Y/N	Gender reassignment	Y/N
Age	Y/N	Pregnancy & maternity	Y/N
Disability	Y/N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y/N
Sexual orientation	Y/N		

This Working Well Together update does not have any direct impact on protected groups as defined within the Equality Act. However, each individual policy has a full People Impact Assessment which demonstrates consideration of all impacts arising from the policy.

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

No health and safety implications associated with this paper.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

This piece of work is helping to strengthen the working relationships between the Service and Trade Unions. We are committed to working in the spirit of the 2007 NJC Joint Protocol for good industrial relations and the structure agreed is in line with those principles.

FUTURE PLANS

We are committed to continuing to work together to develop and deliver policies that support our strategy.

Planned steps for continued improvement:

In response to feedback from colleagues who feel that they are not sighted on our consultation and negotiation activity with our recognised trade unions a Service-wide message was shared in The Shout on the 25 March 2024. The 'Consultation and Negotiation' intranet page has been reviewed and now provides details of our Service Working Well Together Approach, including the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC), Operations Committee Meeting (OCM) and the consultation cycle.

There is also the opportunity for colleagues who are not a member of a trade union to have their say during each consultation by completing an MS Form. They will not receive an individual response, however, all responses will be included in a midway report through and at the end of the phase for consideration and will be shared/published.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

N/A.