

## **Background**

The Authority's People Strategy 2016-2020 was approved by Members at the 3 February 2016 Executive Committee meeting, and was aligned with the Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan 2015–2020. It provides a clear, simple framework, demonstrating how Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) captures the commitment and professionalism of all its people to achieve the Authority's vision, aim, priorities and objectives, as documented in the Public Safety and Corporate Plans.

The People Strategy purpose is to deliver the Authority's goals by linking strategic aims to service-wide initiatives and projects. This approach aims to develop the organisation through the promotion of a culture of employee involvement, ownership, responsibility and trust. It also ensures our employees, alongside our partners and key stakeholders, can see how strategic aims are translated into day-to-day business, highlighting the importance of every person's contribution to achieving the Authority's vision.

The strategic framework highlights the five key areas supporting our overarching People Strategy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Employee Engagement, Resourcing, Talent Management and Employee Wellbeing. Within each area there are a number of strategic outcomes which are aligned with the direction of the Service.

## **Overview**

Our **Vision** is that "Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes are the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.' Our aim and priorities will enable us to capture the commitment and professionalism of all our people to achieve this vision.

**Our Aim** is to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people.

### **Our Priorities are to:**

- Adapt and refresh the workforce to improve service delivery, resilience and delivery of Public Safety Plan outcomes
- Move to flexible, affordable and local terms and conditions to support demand and risk-led people resourcing where appropriate
- Ensure the People Strategy, employment policy, supporting contracts and systems for building capacity and capability are established to support demand and risk-led people resourcing
- Adapt the employee proposition to optimise employee motivation, and to attract and retain the right calibre of high performing people
- Ensure the utmost well-being of our people.

**The key to achieving our Vision, Aim and Priorities is developing an excellent Employee Proposition.**

'The Employee Proposition is the unique set of benefits that the Authority offers in return for employees willingly using their talents to work together with the Authority to make Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.'

The Employee Proposition and People Strategy will ensure the Authority can:

- Recruit, engage and retain the most highly performing and motivated people
- Effectively analyse and forecast the changing internal and external landscape of the services we provide, through data analysis, research and resource modelling
- Ensure our workforce reflects the diverse communities we serve as far as is possible
- Through robust talent management give our people the best opportunities to develop and improve and attain their full potential wherever possible
- Recognise and reward high performance
- Achieve a high level of positive employee involvement through effective and productive employee engagement.

### **What have we achieved so far?**

- Key stakeholders reviewed the current content and updated it with recent successes, to evidence our achievements to date
- Ensured the People Strategy is corporate by liaising with the Communication Team
- Embedded People Strategy management into business as usual
- Created the development environment to meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards
- Implemented accessibility statement
- Implemented language translation
- Implemented Article 30 legal compliance through a managed data subject compliance system to deal with website cookies and data retention
- Added an events calendar and booking system to facilitate event management and recruitment
- Implemented the new Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service website, into which the People Strategy is fully integrated.

### **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion(ED&I) Section:**

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section is embedded as one of the five key areas of the People Strategy.
- Equality Impact Assessments, which focus on ED&I matters, form part of our change management and reporting procedures to support the aim to embed ED&I into all our work
- EDI Objectives for 2020 – 2025 are being presented to the Fire Authority in June for approval, with a focus on tangible, six, twelve and eighteen month objectives
- The ED&I group has representation across the Service; it meets regularly to review progress against objectives, promote, provide feedback on, and support delivery of our ED&I programme.

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The People Strategy ED&I section showcases the work we have carried out to date -

- A Recruitment Plan is in place to support our workforce strategy. A priority of this plan is to attract and retain a diverse workforce by encouraging and actively promoting employment applications from all groups in the community.
- We are a part of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network initiative which supports the Government's commitment to increase the proportion of Apprentices from underrepresented backgrounds to 20 per cent for women, BAME and disabilities.

Other initiatives -

- Introduced initiatives such as the 'Buddies' system whereby existing Firefighters coach candidates on role related testing and build on physical fitness which we have identified as an issue for some groups
- Held awareness evenings and 'Have a go' days solely for females to encourage their attendance and applications for the Firefighter role

### **Employee Engagement Section:**

- In January 2020 a follow up to the 2017 'Your Voice Matters' culture survey was carried out. The three-week survey saw 352 employees respond, this equates to 77 per cent overall which is an increase of 18 per cent on the previous survey. The results were promising and indicated an upward trend in employees moving towards the most effective category of the effectiveness matrix, with an increase of 11 per cent on the 2017 results.
- An employee engagement working group was commissioned consisting of volunteers from departments across the organisation. The group pulled the project together and continue to coordinate and support all areas of the project to ensure it is delivered on time. During the planning phase members from the group visited every station, watch and department of the organisation communicating the benefits of participating in the survey, this included our harder to reach On-Call employees.
- Incorporated into the project plan was a presentation provided by the supplier to deliver the results to our Leadership Group. The presentation was positioned to ensure stakeholders understood the results and their responsibilities in implementing actions.
- Service wide results were published in February shortly followed by the Team and Department results. The Senior Management Team is currently working on service wide actions and priorities and will publish these shortly. The Leadership Group have been asked to report back to working group on their initial findings by the end of May. The Working Group is analysing and filtering the open text questions in preparation to present these results to SMT.

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- The 2020 Culture Survey results will be utilised to set actions and objectives that will map across the new revised People Strategy and align to the Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan 2020 -2025
- How we reward and recognise our employees is currently under review. Reward and recognition was a key area of focus coming out of the last culture survey and the 2020 results highlight a common theme. Content relating to pay-related policies and recognition has been added to promote the Authority's employment proposition. Monetary reward in the form of the long service award remain whilst the review is ongoing. Non-monetary rewards in the form of our employee benefits scheme, letters from the Chief Fire Officer in recognition of good work and our annual SAFE awards have now been embedded
- We carry out on-going communication and consultation with employee groups. Engagement with the trade unions and staff representatives occurs on a regular basis through formal and informal meetings and discussions. These include our Joint Consultation Forum at which EDI is a standing item, and where employee representatives are regularly consulted on new and updated policies, procedures and projects, and are engaged in equality analysis

**Resourcing Section:**

- E-recruitment portal being fully utilised and integrated into the People Strategy to enable all vacancies to be published and applied for in one place
- On-Call recruitment and response model fully embedded.
- Launched targeted recruitment campaigns via social media and DAX (Data Analysis X-expressions - largest digital platform in the UK) to attract and encourage diverse applicants.
- Successfully ran our fifth Apprenticeship campaign where the People Strategy was the first point of contact for all outward-facing advertisements.
- Used the People Strategy as the platform to publish information on the Firefighter Apprenticeship proposition and application process, this included "have a go" days and taster sessions.
- A blended approach to refreshing the workforce introduced to ensure the right blend of skills and attributes are in place to maintain resilience and meet the demand and risk requirements of the operational resourcing model.
- Total number of Firefighter Apprentices recruited to date is 84 with all who successfully complete the apprenticeship being offered employment at the end of their apprenticeship.
- Revision of BMKFA Apprenticeship model was completed in 2019 to ensure our employee proposition remains attractive and in line with other services.
- BMKFA is fully utilising its apprenticeship levy as part of its apprenticeship resourcing strategy and is benefiting from the government's top up scheme which was introduced for employers who spend over their allocated levy and the government top up 90 per cent of the apprenticeship costs.
- Apprenticeships are being used to upskill and retain existing employees as part of our blended approach to learning and development.
- On-Call recruitment has become the focal point for the Thames Valley work force reform working group

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- To ensure that BMKFA is fully prepared for impacts of the court of appeal pensions ruling and outcome from the remedies hearing, detailed workforce planning has taken place, modelled on a range of scenarios is being used to inform the strategic approach to resourcing

**Talent Management Section:**

- Succession planning is undertaken as part of the performance management process and includes a rolling organisational training needs analysis.
- BMKFA talent management programme continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in staff with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed.
- The pilot scheme to identify and develop future leaders in the service was successfully employed to replenish the Area Commander development pool and will be utilised later this year at other levels to validate the process.
- Programme to support and develop newly recruited or promoted managers is ongoing, this approach has future proofed BMKFA and minimised the potential impact on its workforce, ensuring the operational commitment can be maintained.
- BMKFA undertakes regular, systematic and rigorous strategic workforce and succession planning, which incorporates current public safety plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future internal and external challenges.
- In 2019 BMKFA revised its assessment and development process to streamline and clarify the process required for those wishing to go for promotion.
- The Institution of Fire Engineers exams were reintroduced into the Development Centre process to set the standard of technical knowledge required by operational staff at each role.
- Terms of reference and meeting dates for the organisations Appointment's Board were published in January 2020.
- A working group was commissioned to review the current appraisal process with the scope to introducing electronic appraisals, a simplified process and training on how to deliver an effective appraisal.

**Well-being Section:**

- The Well-being strategy was implemented in June 2018 and has regularly been communicated to employees through various means – intranet articles, the Health, Safety and Well-being Committee, via the Well-being Roadshows and the Health, Safety and Well-being update presentations.
- A well-being communications plan is in place and is used to deliver key messages to employees when necessary. An example of this is the launch of the Mental Health Champions and First Aiders within the Service which resulted in excess of 30 applications and received excellent feedback from varying sources. The communications plan is reviewed and updated at each meeting of the Well-being Group.
- A network of Mental Health Champions and First Aiders, who all received the appropriate training, is established. The names of the Mental Health First Aiders were communicated to all employees via the intranet and posted on

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the Health, Safety and Well-being noticeboards which have been installed at each site in the organisation. All Champions and First Aiders have been issued with a green mental health awareness ribbon pin so that employees can identify them and approach them for support where necessary. As this process is informal and confidential, it is not easy to identify the extent to which they have been used by employees. A group has been established, led by the Blue Light Mental Health Champion, for the Champions and First Aiders to identify how much they have been used and to provide support to them, obtain feedback and improve processes moving forwards.

- A review of the well-being self-assessment, first completed in 2018 was carried out in 2019 and has been updated with progress made during the first year of the strategy. The action plan is due a further review at the next Well-being Group meeting.
- The Well-being Group successfully obtained funding for the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing team to be refreshed and retrained in Trauma Support which took place in November 2019. There are now 20 members of the Trauma Support team that can be called upon to deliver debriefs for employees who have been exposed to traumatic events. This will take place either in a group environment or on a one to one basis. The launch of Trauma Support will take place following a briefing to the Strategic Management Board.
- In order to obtain the views of employees of the new well-being measures that have been introduced, and to inform the direction of the Well-being Group over the next twelve months, three questions on mental and physical health were included within the Culture Survey. The feedback was positive with most employees feeling that they are well supported by the Service and are able to talk about mental health issues more openly. They also felt that physical fitness measures in place were adequate.
- A Training Needs Analysis was not submitted by the Well-being Group this financial year as the strategic direction is that training needs should be role essential only due to budgetary restrictions. The focus of the group this year will be the embedding of the new Trauma Support process and completion of the action plan.

### **Next steps**

- Revise the People Strategy to ensure it aligns with the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan.
- Analysis of the workforce and local population demographics to identify opportunities, challenges and gaps, which will inform specifics within the revised strategy.
- Consultation, communication and engagement with key stakeholders to seek views and feedback to consider for the 2020 to 2025 People Strategy and secure buy in.
- Use analysis of 2020 Culture Survey results to inform revised People Strategy.
- Ensure actions from the HMICFRS report are utilised to inform the revised People Strategy and areas of good work within the report are showcased on the strategy.