Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Meeting to be held on **TUESDSAY 21 OCTOBER 2025** at **10.30am** in the Fire Authority Rooms at the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston Mere, Sunderland.

A G E N D A

Part I

7. **People and Culture – Update of Key Departmental Activity** 21

Joint Report of the Chief Fire Officer and the Director of People Services (copy attached)

PETER HEATH
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority)

13 October 2025

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 24 July 2025 at 10.30am at Fire and Rescue Authority Headquarters

Present:

Councillor Hunter in the Chair.

Councillor Blackburn.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell, Dodds, Johnson, Patterson and Welsh.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 10 February 2025, be confirmed as a correct record.

Local Culture Talks and Action Plans

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing Members with an overview of the culture review process, activity to date and an update on culture Talks and Action Plans.

Leanne Cain, the Director of People Services advised Members that in 2021, the Service launched its TWFRS Strategy 2025, focusing on three priorities, including Inclusion, aimed at diversifying the workforce, ensuring fair and transparent employment and progression, and fostering a positive, values-driven culture.

To support this, the Service had worked over the past two years to improve culture, inclusivity, and transparency, including through the HIVE staff engagement survey. Feedback from the first survey (July 2023) informed the Spring 2024 Culture Talks, which identified strengths and areas for development. This feedback shaped the Strategic Cultural Action Plan, shared in August 2024.

A second survey ran from September to October 2024, with a 56% response rate (492 of 882 staff). Questions mirrored the 2023 survey to enable comparison, with minor adjustments based on staff input.

Members were advised that to sustain meaningful engagement, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) led Local Culture Talks would continue across departments/stations, building on previous positive feedback and aligning with staff-identified themes.

Complementing the Strategic Cultural Action Plan, which was now 85% complete, talks would address local issues and help identify areas for further improvement. Staff would contribute to Local Action Plans, promoting ownership, accountability, and alignment with Service Values and the Core Code of Ethics. Members were advised that sessions would encourage open dialogue, and where appropriate, an alternative SLT or Culture & Inclusion team member may lead the discussion.

The Director of People Services stated that each session would cover four mandatory statements, with flexibility to explore additional team-specific topics. Departments/stations would consider both local and service-wide activity to identify trends and share best practice, while also encouraging resilience in addressing challenges.

It was confirmed that all SLT members had received training and resources to support delivery, with additional assistance available from the Culture & Inclusion team.

All Action Plans were to be completed by the end of September 2025.

Councillor Blackburn queried whether the SLT engaged with public forums.
The Deputy Chief Fire Officer clarified that the culture review process was internally focused, with cultural improvement typically addressed within the fire service. Public forums were generally used to consult on service performance.

The Director of People Services added that the Service did contribute to wider discussions, through the Northeast Strategy Development Board, which facilitated the sharing of best practice.

Councillor Blackburn queried the duration of the contract with HIVE. The Director of People Services advised that the initial contract was for twelve months and subsequently extended for a further twelve months. The contract had now expired, and should the Service use a survey platform in the future, it may be necessary to undertake a full tender process.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer whist noting the positive nature of the report, stated that in relation to people and culture, staff had expressed a desire for a break from surveys, which contributed to the decision not to renew the HIVE contract. Although

staff feedback overall was excellent, there remained scope for continued improvement. The Executive Leadership Team and Chief Fire Officer were supportive of future staff-led survey activity and ongoing cultural development.

Councillor Blackburn asked whether response rates were typically higher for the first round of staff surveys. The Director of People Services confirmed that initial surveys did generally receive a higher level of engagement, adding that survey fatigue was common and that staff tended to re-engage when specific changes within the Service prompt a desire to share their views.

The Chair requested that Members be reminded of the four mandatory statements to be addressed during the Local Culture Talks. The Director of People Services responded by reading out the statements for the Committee's information.

2. RESOLVED to: -

(i) Endorse the contents of the report; and

(ii) Receive further reports as appropriate

High Level Recruitment Plan

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report setting out the high-level recruitment plan that had been designed to support the organisation in its aim to deliver its strategy and organisational goals pertaining to Inclusivity & Culture, and the Service's commitment to prioritise a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity for our people.

During which, Members were advised that following the HMI Inspection in November 2021, a report was published assessing the Service's effectiveness, efficiency, and approach to staff welfare. In October 2023, the Service commissioned an independent cultural review and conducted a staff survey to gain further insight. Findings highlighted the need to improve fairness and accessibility in recruitment and to continue efforts to diversify the workforce. These areas remain ongoing priorities for the Service.

The Director of People Services delivered a PowerPoint presentation providing Members with an overview of the High-Level Recruitment Plan.

Members were informed that as part of the 2025–2026 People & Culture Departmental Plans, a 12-month recruitment plan was developed to ensure a transparent, consistent, and effective approach to recruitment and promotion, aligned with strategic goals. The plan included measurable outcomes, with progress to be reported at future People & Culture Board meetings. Key tools such as the Recruitment GANTT Chart and Blueprint milestones would also support Workforce Planning and JCF meetings.

The recruitment plan, as detailed in the PowerPoint presentation, outlined objectives, deliverables, outcomes, quarterly milestones (April 2025 – March 2026), recruitment timelines, positive action initiatives, and marketing strategies.

Councillor Blackburn referred to the presentation's mention of social media and asked whether the Service used platforms such as Facebook or the press to advertise vacancies. The Director of People Services confirmed that the Service had begun to make greater use of social media, including LinkedIn and other platforms. Whilst social media was currently utilised, there was recognition that further development in this area was needed.

Councillor Blackburn asked whether young personnel from the armed forces applied to join the Fire Service, as they did with the police. The Director of People Services confirmed that such applicants were indeed received, although the Service was not currently maximising that recruitment avenue. It was noted that would be a focus for future efforts, alongside exploring other potential recruitment sources.

Councillor Blackburn enquired whether the Service advertised vacancies through Jobcentre Plus. The Director of People Services agreed to check and confirm this.

The Chair emphasised the importance of establishing strong foundational elements "getting the building blocks right" before progressing further.

Following this, the Chair inquired about the Teakisi partnership. Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (TACFO) Leach responded by explaining that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service became involved in the Teakisi partnership through County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. The purpose of the collaborative partnership was to encourage applications from individuals in minoritised communities for the Service's current firefighter apprenticeship programme and support and enhance the Service's ongoing efforts to build a more inclusive workforce.

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to receive a future report outlining how the Service engages with young people to inspire interest in joining Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS). As part of this, the Chair proposed that an internally produced promotional video could be a useful tool to help educate young people about the wide range of roles available within the Service.

In response, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted that there was a valuable conversation to be had around the diverse opportunities available within the Service. While the cadet programme was often associated with firefighter roles, it was highlighted that there were many other career pathways within the organisation that young people could pursue.

Members noted the report and thanked officers for the presentation. It was then: -

3. RESOLVED to: -

(i) Receive further reports as appropriate.

(Signed) J HUNTER
Chair

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY **Item No. 4**

MEETING: HR COMMITTEE 21 OCTOBER 2025

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD 2025

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, ESTATES AND FACILITIES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with the Annual Report from the Local Pension Board (LPB) up to 30 September 2025.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members are reminded that within the Terms of Reference of the LPB there is a provision for the LPB to produce an annual report "highlighting areas of concern and identifying good practice"

2.2 The purpose of the LPB is to assist Tyne and Wear Fire Authority (TWFRA) in its role as a scheme manager of the Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme. Its primary roles are to:

- Secure compliance with the Regulations, any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme, and requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Scheme; and

- Ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme.

2.3 The LPB provides an oversight of these matters and as such the Board is not a decision-making body in relation to the management of the Scheme but merely makes recommendations to assist in such management.

2.4 The Board is made up of six members, three acting as employer and three as employee representatives.

3 MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

3.1 The terms of reference of the board state there should be at least two meetings each calendar year in line with legislation. However, the Pension Regulator believes that four meetings each year is more acceptable, and as such the Authority aims for four meetings each calendar year.

3.2 There have been four meetings in the last twelve-month period, covering the following items:

- 29 November 2024:
  - Review of the terms of reference
  - Risk Register
  - Breach reporting
- 28 February 2025:
  - Review of the terms of reference
  - Risk Register
  - Pension Fund reports
  - Action Plan
- 30 May 2025:
  - Review of the terms of reference
  - Risk Register
  - Pension Fund reports
  - Breaches
  - Action Plan
- 29 August 2025:
  - Cycle of meetings
  - LPB membership
  - Risk Register
  - Pension Fund reports
  - Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure

3.3 The key areas of work being undertaken by the Service and discussed during LPB meetings are as follows:

Terms of Reference: the Terms of Reference have been reviewed to provide clarity to members moving forward and to ensure that meetings remain quorate.

McCloud/Sargeant Remedy: the Remedy process is ongoing, with all TWFRS data being supplied to the pensions administrator (West Yorkshire Pension Fund, WYPF).

Remediable Service Statements (RSSs): WYPF did not provide membership with RSSs by legislative deadline (31/03/2025). This was reported as a breach at the earliest opportunity to the Pensions Regulator (TPR) by both the Service and WYPF.

Most active scheme members (c.220) received their RSS by the revised deadline of 30 June. However, a specific tranche of approximately 70 members, where the delay was outside of WYPF / TWFRS control (e.g. missing previous data, missing national guidance for previous transfer in, or previous divorce), the Scheme Manager elected to provide a six-month extension as permitted under legislation.

It should be noted that WYPF has failed to meet this revised deadline of 30 September 2025 and the Service will be reporting a further breach to TPR at the earliest opportunity.

This breach has also triggered 114 *Stage 1* internal dispute resolution procedures (IDRPs). At the time of writing, 111 cases have been resolved within the two-month deadline. The outstanding 3 cases are being dealt with within their respective deadlines. Two *Stage 2* appeals have been received and have been dealt with within their respective two-month deadlines.

As a result of active members receiving their RSSs, members previously in the Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS 92) have been offered the opportunity to pay owed pension contributions back early. 24 elections of interest have been received to date, which will be processed in due course. Members who were previously in the New Firefighters Pension Scheme 2006 (NFPS 2006) can elect to take a refund of the excess contributions paid. 38 elections of interest have been received to date; these are currently being processed.

Matthews Retained Exercise: this is a pension remedy for retained (part-time) firefighters in the UK, allowing them to buy back pension service for earlier employment periods that were previously excluded. To be eligible, a retained firefighter must have served between 7 April 2000 and 30 June 2006.

It is believed that the Service has around 35 eligible members who must be provided with a statement of pension benefits available to purchase (by 31 March 2026). Whilst the numbers are relatively low, this is a very complex piece of work and is expected to be very labour intensive.

Governance: the Pensions Regulator introduced a new general code effective from 28 March 2024. It consolidates 10 previous codes and sets out governance standards for occupational pension schemes. Compliance with the code is mandatory, and the work required to ensure that the Service is fully compliant will be very significant.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 There are no risk management implications directly related to this report. There is a risk register which is monitored by the pension board.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no health and safety implications in this report.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY **Item No. 5**

MEETING: HR COMMITTEE 21 OCTOBER 2025

SUBJECT: HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY – UPDATE ON KEY DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The People Services function is made up of three individual departments each with its own clear area of focus. This report provides an update on some of the key activity which is currently ongoing within the Health, Wellbeing and Safety department including a review of our Trauma Support offer and ongoing health promotion work with a focus on resilience, stress awareness and mental health.

2 TRAUMA SUPPORT OFFER

2.1 All Fire and Rescue Services are responsible for providing psychological support to their operational crews. TWFRS current offer is based around the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefing model which involves the reduction or mitigation of the impact of a critical incident, promotion of resilience and the recovery process, returning first responders to duty following a traumatic event, and evaluation of the need for additional services where required.

2.2 We have recently undertaken a review of our current trauma support model to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As part of this review, we have reached out to neighbouring blue light services and other FRS's nationally to determine what they are doing, what works well and what doesn't.

2.3 Following this review, we have sourced a training provider who deliver a programme that is aligned to our current practice and is therefore easily transferable. This will help us to enhance our existing Trauma Support team without too much change to the already accepted approach, but it will also allow us to build in a "Train the Trainer" element for suitably qualified (clinical) practitioners, enabling us to introduce a solution with the required longevity.

2.4 The new programme will provide refresher training for our existing Trauma Support Team (TST) via a one-day course aimed at enhancing learning and knowledge of the first stage of debriefing, and to convert them from the seven

stages of CISM (Mitchell model) to a more condensed model.

2.5 In addition, we will be in a position to offer training to more delegates therefore increasing the TST numbers. Recruitment for these roles take place via an internal campaign including an expression of interest application form, followed by a professional discussion to ensure that the candidates possess the essential skills.

2.6 The new TST members will be required to undergo a 3-day training course consisting of theory-based learning, group discussions and interactive case studies aimed at demonstrating and reinforcing key elements of the training. During the course, participants will have the opportunity to observe, take part in, and facilitate a debriefing. All activities take into account participants' individual learning styles and provide a broad range of experiential and shared learning.

2.7 Once the TST training is complete, the Train the Trainer session will be facilitated, and upon completion TWFRS will be licenced to facilitate this training itself. Future roll out of this training can only take place with appropriately qualified (clinical) employees but can be co-delivered with the more experienced TST volunteers, again building in longevity and self-sufficiency for the team.

3 HEALTH PROMOTION WORK: FOCUS ON RESILIENCE, STRESS AWARENESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

3.1 TWFRS are introducing more of a focus on health promotion sessions for employees to raise awareness of key issues and outline available support. These sessions will be centered around national awareness days, pillars of health and targeted health promotion depending on the needs of the different departments.

3.2 It is known that over time stress can have a damaging impact on our psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing. Psychological resilience can protect individuals from its effects and boost their ability to regain a sense of control in their lives. As mental well-being and mental health are one of the highest causes of absence within TWFRS, it is recommended that the first training session we run will focus on resilience and stress awareness and will be offered to our managers.

3.3 The aim of the training is to equip managers with the knowledge to be able to identify their own stressors and resilience factors inside and outside of the workplace. It will also teach them to support colleagues who may be exhibiting signs of stress.

3.4 Roll out of the training is due to commence in November 2025. Feedback following each session will be collected and reviewed to ensure we continuously improve the sessions and that they remain fit for purpose.

3.5 In addition to the training outlined above, the Health and Safety team will also be working with managers to educate them in line with the HSE management standards and Talking tool kit. This approach will enable us to demonstrate the required compliance in accordance with relevant legislation.

3.6 Finally, the OHU team is currently re-designing a mental health and stress awareness presentation which will be delivered at SHQ and on station to ensure we are educating all of our staff about the signs and symptoms of mental health and stress. These sessions will signpost to resources both within TWFRS and externally and will encourage our people to gain support at the early stages.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 Failure to review and introduce an appropriate Trauma Support offer could result in TWFRS being unable to offer trauma support sessions. The team are currently low in numbers, and the resources are stretched. If it is reasonably foreseeable to an employer that an employee may be caused psychiatric damage by either the character, or their work tasks, then the employer is under a ‘duty of care’ to provide a ‘safe system of work’ so as to avoid any such risk.

4.2 Failure to implement health promotion activity could be perceived as TWFRS not implementing reasonable strategies to reduce unnecessary and preventable health risks, or to appropriately support managers and employees when experiencing such issues.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Authority is recommended to:

a) Endorse the contents of this report

b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under-mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report: None included.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY **Item No. 6**

MEETING: HR COMMITTEE 21 OCTOBER 2025

SUBJECT: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT – UPDATE ON KEY DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The People Services function is made up of three individual departments each with its own clear area of focus. This report provides an update on some of the key activity which is currently ongoing within the Learning and Development (L&D) department including development of our new Values and Behaviours framework and roll out of a 360-degree feedback mechanism for our middle and senior managers.

2 VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS FRAMEWORK

2.1 Several pieces of work have been completed across the Service to assess and influence organisational culture (JSA Independent Organisational Review, HIVE Employee Engagement surveys, Culture talks). This work has provided the Service with valuable insight from people throughout the organisation.

2.2 The work outlined above informed the L&D team in reviewing our organisational values and developing an updated set of values and an associated behaviours framework.

2.3 Updating our organisational values provides a strategic approach to supporting an inclusive workforce that demonstrates high levels of both performance and behaviour.

2.4 The values which were approved by ELT include Integrity, Safety, Inclusivity and Learning, and more detail is provided below.

TWFRS Values Statements

Simply put, our value statements answer the question, "Regardless of what we're working on, how will we work?"

Integrity

Be trustworthy / Be authentic / Be open and honest

- We commit to acting with integrity by being open, honest and authentic in all our dealings.
- We will uphold the highest ethical standards, building trust through our actions.

Safety

Be diligent and observant / Be caring and compassionate / Be accountable

- We will prioritise the safety and well-being of every one of our people, partners and our community.
- We commit to creating a workplace focussed on preventing accidents, injury and psychological injury.

Inclusivity

Encourage engagement / Promote equity / Be collaborative

- We will commit to building a welcoming, inclusive workplace where everyone feels engaged, valued and respected.
- We will listen to and encourage different perspectives, where everyone has a voice and can bring their authentic self to work and contribute fully to our organisations success.

Learning

Be curious / Seek and encourage development / Continuously improve

- We commit to creating an environment where continuous learning and improvement is prioritised, valued, and integrated into the daily operations and mind-set of our organisation.

- We will encourage new ideas, perspectives and experiences, and we will seek new ways to share learning with others, recognising those committed to learning and developing themselves, their teams and the wider organisation.

2.5 Moving forward, it is vital that the values and behaviours are understood, adopted, embedded and demonstrated at all levels, both internally and externally within the community we serve.

2.6 Strategic and senior leaders will be crucial in setting a positive tone and supporting the embedding of our new values and behaviours framework. It is essential that the Senior Leadership Team are personally and collectively committed to adopting, promoting and embedding them.

2.7 Effective communication of the values and behaviours, their purpose and how they impact every person is essential to embed them and positively impact the culture of the Service.

2.8 A draft implementation plan has been developed and is broken down into four key phases including 1. preparation and alignment, 2. developing awareness,

3. official launch and 4. reflect and review. **See appendix 1 – for more detail surrounding each of the proposed phases of the roll out plan.**

3 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

3.1 The HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight report identified that 360-degree feedback should be implemented for all managers across the Service. This would serve as a tool to help build leaders awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others and facilitate personal reflection.

3.2 The L&D team scoped out the parameters of this project, and a procurement process was run to identify a suitable supplier. The team then worked with the awarded supplier to tailor a comprehensive 360-feedback form and associated reports for supervisory, middle and strategic managers.

3.3 Roll out of the 360-feedback project has now commenced, starting with ELT members on the 24th September. The *Leading the Function* assessment will then be released to SLT members on w/c/ 27th October, and then to remaining middle managers on w/c 1st December.

3.4 Leaders will be required to complete a self-assessment, followed by them then sharing the 360 assessments with at least seven raters who will include their line manager, three direct reports and three peers. These assessments are completed anonymously. Additional raters can be invited as desired to give a broader range of feedback.

3.5 Upon completion of the rater assessments, a personal report will be compiled. A Psychologist will then facilitate a one-to-one session with the leader to share and review the feedback report. The report is the property of the leader, and they are not required to share it, however, they are encouraged to discuss the relevant points in regular one-to-ones and PDRs.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The updated values and behaviour framework is the foundation of how we will do things and is required to be understood by our people and embedded throughout all service procedures and processes. This is a significant piece of work and will be managed through the proposed implementation plan detailed in appendix 1.

4.2 The need to deliver 360-feedback was identified as a recommendation in the HMICFRS Values & Culture Spotlight inspection, so a failure to deliver this would presumably impact negatively on future inspection outcomes.

4.3 There is a risk of poor communication regarding the purpose of 360-feedback, the associated process and resistance to change. This is being managed through a communication plan.

4.4 There is a risk that 360-feedback information could be requested as part of a Freedom of Information Request. Individual reports are personal data and would not need to be shared. However, anonymized summaries of 360

feedback, such as a summary of ELT or SLT could be requested and would need to be shared.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Authority is recommended to:

a) Endorse the contents of this report

b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under-mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report: Appendix 1 – Values and Behaviors Framework – draft implementation plan.

Appendix 1

Values & Behaviors Framework
Draft Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Preparation & Alignment

Objective: Ensure ELT & SLT buy-in and internal alignment before launch.

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:**

Brief ELT for strategic alignment.

Identify key influencers across SLT/departments.

- Head of People & Culture
- Head of Service Improvement
- SD GMs
- Culture & Inclusion Manager
- Corporate Comms

Brief SLT and middle managers for senior leadership alignment and understanding to support introduction to department managers and teams.

2. **Embed the Framework:**

Align the framework with existing policies, procedures and processes including:

- Recruitment, onboarding and inductions
- Performance management
- Development pathways
- Learning programmes
- Recognition programmes
- Capability & performance procedure
- Discipline procedure
- Grievance procedure

3. **Communication & Branding:**

Develop key messages and a narrative for why the framework is required, how it will support service values and goals and how it will be relevant and beneficial for people.

Develop a communication plan for sharing and understanding of the framework.

Create a visual identity for the framework (icons, posters, digital signage, intranet banners, etc)

Phase 2: Develop Awareness

Objective: Create excitement and awareness across the organisation.

1. **Communications Campaign:**

Weekly themed comms introducing the framework and the groups of behaviors.
Share posters, Vlogs/stories, comms piece, digital signage/intranet banners.

2. **Engagement Sessions:**

Review in Middle Manager Engagement Sessions.

Phase 3: Launch

Objective: Launch the Values and Behaviour Framework across the Service

1. **CFO announcement/VLOG**.

2. **Department talks:**

Department Heads introduce the V&B framework to teams
Communicate expectations and application for people at different levels:

- Team member
- Supervisory manager — Leading others
- Middle manager — Leading the department/function
- Strategic manager — Leading the service

3. **Manager Toolkits -** Provide slide decks, FAQs, and conversation guides for team discussions.

Phase 4: Reflect and Review

Objective: Obtain feedback and evaluation of embedding and impact

1. **Obtain feedback:**

- Employee Engagement Surveys
    - Include questions on value alignment, leadership modelling, and behavioural consistency.
    - Focus groups / ELT listening events / Culture talks

2. **Evaluate embedding and impact:**

- HR Analytics
    - Recruitment / retention / exit data
    - Employee relations data
    - Performance management data

3. **Annual Review:**

- Revisit the framework annually to ensure relevance.
- Celebrate progress and refresh materials as needed.
- Share real examples of values in action via comms piece and Vlogs

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY **Item No. 7**

MEETING: HR COMMITTEE 21 OCTOBER 2025

SUBJECT: PEOPLE AND CULTURE – UPDATE ON KEY DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The People Services function consists of three individual departments, each with a specific area of focus. This report provides highlights key activities currently ongoing within the People and Culture (P&C) department including the Strategic Recruitment and Promotion Review Plan, as well as updates on key projects including the Green Book Review and HR Information System.

2 RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION REVIEW PLAN

2.1 Further to the Q1 Recruitment and Promotion Review Plan update provided in July, work has now commenced, and progress is being made towards the Q2 objectives. **See appendix 1 – for an overview of the strategic recruitment and promotion review plan.**

2.2 The Recruitment GANTT Chart has now been established and is now used on a weekly basis. It is used as a key tool during workforce planning meetings, helping to coordinate recruitment activities by providing visibility over planning, resourcing, and timelines.

2.3 Each promotion process is supported by a set of key milestones which sits behind the GANTT chart. These milestones are continuously refined after each cycle to drive ongoing improvements and enhance the overall effectiveness of the promotion framework.

2.4 A Firefighter Recruitment Group, comprising of key stakeholders from across the Service had their first meeting on 22nd September 2025. The group explored potential improvements to the wholetime FF recruitment process. A paper outlining the recommendations from the meeting will be submitted to the People & Culture Board in November for decision and approval. The proposals are aimed at enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion in our upcoming recruitment campaign.

2.5 Although the Promotions Policy is not scheduled for a full review until 2026, a debrief has been conducted following the recent Station Manager promotion process. Key learnings have been captured and will inform the formal review next year. Any additional promotion processes occurring before the policy review will also be followed by a debrief to ensure continuous improvement.

2.6 The recruitment section on the intranet has now been updated with key documents such as advert templates, job descriptions and person specifications. Updated guidance documents and benefits information have also been available.

2.7 The next steps involve reviewing existing interview questions for both operational and corporate roles. A centralised question bank will be developed to support recruiting managers. This will help ensure we have consistency across the Service as well as to align questions to role specific requirements and performance expectations and begin embedding our new values and behaviours framework.

3 GREEN BOOK REVIEW

3.1 The Service has identified the need to undertake a comprehensive Green Book Review. This will involve carrying out a full job evaluation of all Green Book roles across the Service, with the aim of developing a new, fair and transparent pay and grading scheme.

3.2 The P&C team has defined the scope, key steps, and milestones for the Green Book Review project. A procurement process was completed to appoint a supplier with extensive expertise in job evaluation, who will work closely with the Service throughout the delivery of the job evaluation process. In addition, a dedicated Job Evaluation Project Team has been established to provide ongoing support and ensure successful implementation.

3.3 The Green Book Review project is now progressing well, with a range of activities completed to support both role evaluation and staff engagement. These include staff briefing sessions, training for staff and managers to prepare for the Job Description Questionnaire (JDQ) process, system and data readiness, and active engagement with key stakeholders, including trade union representatives.

3.4 Briefing Sessions

As part of the Green Book Review project, a total of 12 familiarisation sessions have been delivered to date. To ensure full coverage and maximise employee engagement, additional mop-up sessions are planned, and a recorded version of the session is available on the Intranet. Attendance has been strong, with

175 Green Book staff and 13 Grey Book line managers having participated so far.

3.5 JDQ Process

JDQ training has been successfully completed for all members of the project team. A total of 14 JDQ sessions are scheduled to take place between 10 and 17 October, with a mop-up session planned for 20 October to ensure full participation. To date, 189 employees have booked onto a session, reflecting strong engagement across the Service. Supporting communications have been issued to all affected employees, and a dedicated intranet page has been developed to provide ongoing updates and resources.

3.6 System and Data Preparation

Gauge system training has been completed for the Job Evaluation project team. During this process, several data inaccuracies were found and flagged for correction. Reports have been created to show current Green Book roles and to distinguish between live and archived jobs in the Gauge system. Pilat reports containing all necessary job information have been prepared to support upcoming evaluations. A tracker and action plan have also been developed and are being updated regularly to monitor progress.

3.7 Stakeholder Engagement

Targeted communications have been issued to Grey Book line managers and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to raise awareness of the Green Book Review project and encourage active participation. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), compiled from the briefing sessions, will be published on the intranet following the final mop-up session to further support understanding and engagement.

4 HR INFORMATION SYSTEM

4.1 The procurement process for the new HR Information System (HRIS) is progressing well, with several key milestones already achieved:

- The system specification has been formally approved by the Programme Board.
- A longlist of potential suppliers was identified via the Digital Marketplace.
- The approved specification was issued to the longlisted suppliers.

- Following evaluation, two suppliers were shortlisted for further consideration.
- Supplier presentations were held on 18th and 25th September 2025, involving key stakeholders from across the organisation. These presentations have been scored and submitted to Procurement.
- Procurement is now preparing the delegation, which will proceed through the formal governance process for final approval.

4.2 This structured approach ensures transparency, promotes stakeholder involvement, and supports alignment with the Services needs as the project moves into its next phase.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 Effective risk management is integral to the successful delivery of both the HR Information System (HRIS) and Green Book Review projects, as well as the Recruitment and Promotion Review Plan.

5.2 Recruitment and Promotion Review Plan – the risks associated with not delivering this plan include failure to properly coordinate and implement recruitment activities, to have no visibility and transparency in relation to recruitment and promotion processes, no continuous improvement of recruitment and promotion processes which will streamline and update existing recruitment processes and documentation, such as adverts, job descriptions, person specifications and application forms.

5.3 Green Book Review – the risk to the Service of not undertaking a job evaluation process is that there is potentially an equal pay claim risk due to inconsistencies in how jobs roles are currently graded and paid, as well as not modernising the pay and grading structure

5.4 HRIS – the current HRIS (Core HR) licence will expire in September 2026, which provides an opportunity for the Service to procure a new HRIS. The risk of not procuring a new HRIS within the required timeframes is that the current HRIS has limited functionality which has led to inefficiencies, increased administrative burden and reduced data integrity.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

a) Endorse the contents of this report

b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under-mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report: Appendix 1 – overview of the strategic recruitment and promotion review plan.

1. 2025-2026 People & Culture Department - Recruitment and Promotion Review Plan

The Service are conducting an in-depth review of the recruitment and promotion procedures, ensuring we are committed to ensuring selection, development and promotion of staff is open and fair, that the methods we have in place are suitable and sufficient and to reinforce the staff confidence in these processes.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Creating the Safest Community

Q1
- Review & update Recruitment Policy
- Review & update Right to Work Process
- Produce Recruitment Gantt Chart
- Update external web pages - Recruitment & Careers
- Review & update Watch Manager Promotion Process – Create Blueprint
- Review & update Fire Fighter Recruitment Process – Create Blueprint

Q2
- Review & update FF Interview questions
- Review & update Promotion Policy
- Update Recruitment Intranet Pages
- Review & update all recruitment documents and templates
- Review & update Station Manager Promotion Process – Create Blueprint
- Review & update Corporate Recruitment Process – Create Blueprint

Q4
- Work with Comms to publish the upcoming recruitment campaigns for 2026
- Publish an article capturing updates and improvements to the Recruitment & Promotion process made in 2025
- Review & update all marketing materials for recruitment and promotion campaigns

Q3
- Review where and how we are advertising vacancies
- Review Crew Manager Process
- Update Recruitment Gantt Chart with 2026 Recruitment Campaigns
- Create a Bank of questions to support Recruiting Managers & standardise across job levels

Appendix 1