

HR POLICIES UPDATE**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER****For Approval****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Elected Members of the Authority's revisions to the following Policies and Procedures:
- Sexual Harassment Policy (Appendix 1)
 - Promotion and Appointments Policy (Appendix 2)

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the updated Policies attached as Appendices 1 - 2.

3. SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Sexual Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010, which has recently been amended to include a new preventative duty. The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 includes a legal duty for employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers and employees. The duty covers sexual harassment by other workers and by third parties, such as members of the public.
- 3.2 The policy has been developed as employers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent the sexual harassment and victimisation of its employees. The Policy demonstrates that the service is committed to promoting an environment where all employees are treated with dignity and respect and a culture that encourages anyone who is a victim of or is witness to sexual harassment to report any issues or concerns.
- 3.3 The aim of the policy is to educate the workforce on what may constitute as sexual harassment and to provide framework for employees and managers to deal with any sexual harassment that may occur. The policy should be read in conjunction with the expected standards of behaviour set out in the Brigades Dignity at Work Policy, Code of Conduct and Values and Ethical Behaviours Framework.
- 3.4 As part of the development of the draft policy, feedback was sought from the workforce via the Health, Fitness and Wellbeing and Women's network groups, no comments received.

- 3.5 The Trade Unions have been consulted, Unison and the FBU were happy with the aim and content of the policy however both gave a recommendation of adding a section that encourages employees to raise any issues regarding sexual harassment to them at their earliest opportunity to allow the appropriate support to be arranged by the union and to allow for internal investigations at an early stage.
- 3.6 The proposed policy is provided at Appendix 1.

4. PROMOTION & APPOINTMENTS POLICY

- 4.1 The Authority's Promotion and Appointments Policy, attached as Appendix 2, has been revised following an evaluation conducted to assess the effectiveness of the changes trialled during a recent Station Manager promotion process. These changes were introduced in response to feedback received directly from employees and through the 2024 Staff Cultural Survey, where 38% of respondents expressed concerns about the fairness and transparency of existing promotion processes.
- 4.2 The review has also considered the recommendations within HMICFRS report 'Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services' (August 2024), specifically:

Recommendation 3: Chief fire officers should make sure firefighters who are promoted are posted to a different watch or station, including when the promotion is temporary for two months or more. If this isn't possible, chief fire officers should show how the risks of reinforcing a negative culture have been addressed.

- 4.3 The policy sets out the eligibility criteria, assessment methods, development support, and governance arrangements that underpin the Services appointments processes.
- 4.4 Its purpose is to provide a clear, fair, and consistent framework for the appointment of leaders, ensuring that all decisions are based on merit and aligned with the Services values and strategic objectives.
- 4.5 The Policy has been equality impact assessed with no negative impacts being identified.
- 4.6 Trade Union consultation has taken place, they confirmed that they were happy to agree to the policy, stating it was a very clear and concise document. They also praised the inclusion of reasonable adjustments for those who are neurodivergent.
- 4.7 The proposed policy is provided at Appendix 2.

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