

**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:

- Menopause Policy & Procedure (Appendix 1)
- Probationary Policy & Procedure (Appendix 2)
- Transfer Policy & Procedure (Appendix 3)

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 Members are asked to approve the updated Policies attached as Appendices 1 - 3.

**3. MENOPAUSE POLICY & PROCEDURE**

3.1 The policy has been developed to signal that the organisation understands the menopause and is committed to supporting affected staff and taking a proactive stance to seek to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices. Although we promote the NFCC Menopause Guidance and toolkit this policy outlines the available support, such as adjustments to the working environment specific to the Service. The purpose is to work together as an organisation to:

- Improve employees understanding of the menopause, the impact on individuals and related issues.
- Encourage individuals to feel comfortable to engage in discussions.
- Provide guidance to managers in supporting colleagues.
- Support employees to manage their experiences and seek support for symptoms.
- Work together to seek solutions to challenges and difficulties faced by staff during the menopause transition.

3.2 As part of the development of the draft policy, feedback was sought from operational staff via our Women's Network, specifically regarding any reasonable adjustments that may be required and applied. This input helped ensure the policy is inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the workforce.

3.3 The Trade Unions have been consulted, Unison were happy with no comments, however the FBU gave some recommendations such as adding some information

into the draft to explain the relationship between the Menopause and Neurodiversity which has been included in the draft.

- 3.4 The proposed policy is provided at Appendix 1.

#### **4. PROBATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

- 4.1 Previously, the Service's approach to probationary periods was briefly outlined within the Recruitment & Selection Policy. To enhance clarity and accessibility for staff, a decision was made to develop a dedicated probationary policy. This ensures a more structured and transparent process for supporting new employees and managing expectations from the outset of employment.
- 4.2 Cleveland Fire Brigade expects all employees to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of performance, conduct and attendance. To achieve this the Service recognises that a supportive and developmental probationary period process is crucial to ensure new employees receive the appropriate level of training and support upon commencement of employment. The policy provides a framework to ensure that any concerns are identified and managed in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.
- 4.3 The policy provides a framework for managers and new employees to follow to facilitate a successful induction to the Service and their new role and to give clarity regarding support and the appropriate procedure when an employee is not meeting the required work standards.
- 4.4 The policy also responds to a recommendation from HMICRFS Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services report 2024, which states "by 1 February 2025, chief fire officers should make sure a policy for probationary staff is in place. This policy should make clear that services can immediately dismiss probationers who fail to meet the required standards of behaviour set out in the Core Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics fire standard".
- 4.5 The Trade Unions have been consulted, Unison confirmed they were satisfied with the policy and had no comments, however the FBU had some questions which have been responded to, which included the rationale to increase green book probationary period from 3 months to 6 months with the response given that 6 months is a more sensible approach to ensure that a fair amount of time is given to both parties, a fair opportunity to learn and adapt to new environment for the employee, to receive support and training and for the Brigade to ensure an accurate assessment of the new employee. To note, the new UK Employment Rights Bill, likely to come into effect in Autumn 2026, will introduce a statutory probation period which looks like it could be anything up to nine months. We will need to tweak the policy at that point.
- 4.6 The policy was shared with Head of Training and Assurance for operational input.
- 4.7 The proposed policy is provided at Appendix 2.

**5. TRANSFER POLICY & PROCEDURE**

- 5.1 Previously, the Service's approach to transfers was outlined in two separate documents: voluntary transfers were addressed within the Recruitment & Selection Policy, while non-voluntary transfers were covered under Local Agreement 3.
- 5.2 To improve clarity and accessibility for staff, a decision was made to consolidate both voluntary and non-voluntary transfers into a single, dedicated policy.
- 5.3 The review of this policy also responds to a recommendation in HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services report 2024, which states "Chief fire officers should make sure their workforce plans allow staff to be moved from a wholetime watch to a different watch or station, within their contractual requirements, proactively and reactively as required".
- 5.4 A key proposed change within the policy is the removal of the vested period requirement for staff transfers. Historically, this requirement meant that employees had to remain in post for a minimum duration of two years post competency or previous transfer before becoming eligible to transfer. While originally intended to support workforce stability, the vested period has increasingly been viewed as restrictive and out of step with contemporary workforce needs. The decision to remove this requirement reflects the Service's commitment to creating a more flexible, responsive, and inclusive working environment. It supports both operational effectiveness and employee wellbeing and aligns with evolving workforce expectations.
- 5.5 The Workforce Development Group, Culture & Wellbeing Board and Trade Unions have been consulted on the changes and the feedback received has been incorporated into the review.
- 5.6 The proposed policy is provided at Appendix 3.

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