SUMMARY REPORT INTO EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2017

Report to: Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group (HRP&CG)

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REFERENCED DOCUMENTS:
- BFRS Opinion Survey 2017 Report of Findings – ORS – August 2017
- BFRS Opinion Survey 2017 statistical analysis – ORS – July 2017
- Inclusive Fire Service Cultural and Behavioural Survey – NJC – 2016
- BFRS Opinion Survey 2015 Report of Findings – ORS – June 2015

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1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Employee Survey was available for all staff to complete from 8 May to 16 June 2017.

1.2   A total of 347 questionnaires were completed online and 23 were returned on paper, giving a total of 370 completed questionnaires; this provides a 62.8% response rate. The highest previous return rate was 42% in 2014/15.

1.3   The survey followed the themes and questions of previous years to allow for direct comparisons and contained questions on the following themes:

- Equality in the Workplace
- Professional Standards
- Managing Equality
- Carers
- Work-Life Balance
- Personal Development
- Organisational Growth
- Job Satisfaction

1.4   The survey considers these 8 themes against 3 areas: staff engagement; satisfaction and equality & diversity. This paper will provide the key findings from ORS and consider in more detail the key outcomes in each of the theme areas listed above.

1.5   There are areas of improvement from previous surveys throughout the report and in particular around the areas of Personal Development and Managing Equality. There are a number of areas that have either remained consistent or have declined since the previous survey.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 BFRS carries out Employee Surveys every two years. Previous surveys were held in 2008/9, 2011/12, 2014/15 and now in 2017.

2.2 To support a high return rate, a number of initiatives were undertaken. These included:
- A road show undertaken by the Diversity Advisor (DA), visiting a number of stations and watches in order to promote the Survey (DA has commented that this proved popular and helped to reassure staff of the confidential nature of the survey);
- Offering fixed payment to On-Call Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel for time given to completing the survey to encourage a higher engagement rate;
- Email reminders throughout the Survey period encouraging engagement; and
- Completion was supported by both an online and paper based survey option.

3. WEIGHTING AND RESPONSE

3.1 Weighting

3.1.1 The survey results have been weighted by ORS, where necessary, to correct for some over-and-under representation in the returned sample. The results presented here and within the report are therefore considered representative of all staff employed by BFRS. Where the report discusses the un-weighted data it refers to 'respondents' and for the weighted data the report refers to 'employees'.

3.2 Response Rates

3.2.1 Overall 62.8% of all staff completed the questionnaire

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1.1 The survey provides responses against 3 areas. A comparison can be achieved against 2014/15 by considering an overall percentage across all 8 themes for each area of engagement; satisfaction; and equality and diversity:

	2014/15	2017	change
Overall engagement levels	77%	71%	-6%
Overall satisfaction levels	60%	55%	-5%
Overall equality and diversity (perceptions)	58%	60%	+2%

4.1.2   The following summary has been provided by ORS who state that the outcomes provide an 'indication of performance'.

4.1.3   The summary is divided into 'areas of high performance' and 'areas for consideration'. The percentages are taken from results provided by ORS.

4.2   Areas of High Performance

4.2.1   The report presents some areas of high performance.   The following bullet points are provided by ORS by way of summary:

- 92% of employees said that they feel valued by their team, while 84% said that they felt valued by their line managers (an increase of 5% and 6% respectively over 2014/15).

- 89% said that they can express their views and opinions to colleagues openly and without fear, while 80% felt the same about their line managers (this is an improvement of 3% from 2014/15 and 11% from 2011).

- 80% agreed that their colleagues and 79% their line mangers set high personal standards and lead by example (an increase of 10% and 9% respectively from previous).

- 83% of employees agreed that their line managers treat them fairly and with respect.

- 95% of employees reported that if a colleague was being harassed, bullied or discriminated against, they would be likely to support them.

- 84% of employees agreed that it is fair to provide people with disabilities with some appropriate facilities to assist their particular needs (a 4% improvement over previous).

- 81% reported that they have not been unfairly refused training within the last two years.

- 87% stated that they had not been unfairly passed over for promotion within the last two years.

- 89% of employees reported that they have had an appraisal within the last two years (significant improvement from 75% previously).

- 82% of those who have had an appraisal in the last 12 months felt that they had the opportunity to have their say.

4.3   Areas for Consideration

4.3.1   ORS have stated that the report provides statistical evidence of a widening relationship between staff groups categorised as 'colleagues' and 'line managers' to those categorised as 'middle manager' and 'senior manager'.

4.3.2   It should be noted that a line manager receiving a high percentage by their direct reports could similarly be classified as a middle or senior manager by others and given a low percentage.

4.3.3   The following bullet points represent areas that ORS consider would benefit further consideration:

- 48% of employees reported that they were satisfied with their present job with 37% dissatisfied (previously 60% reported being satisfied and 26% dissatisfied).

- 64% did not feel valued by senior management and 55% did not feel valued by middle management (previously this was 51% and 43%).

- 45% of employees said that they are normally treated fairly at work, while 38% disagreed with this statement (previously 20% disagreed).

- 71% disagreed that they can express their views and opinions to senior management openly and without fear and 62% felt the same about middle management (previously 50% and 48% respectively disagreed).

- 68% of employees reported that they are likely to leave in the next 5 years, 32% reported that they are not likely to leave during this period (previously 51% reported they may leave).

- 27% of staff felt that middle management set high professional standards and led by example 54% felt that they did not (previously 40% reported high standards being set).

- 25% felt that senior management set high professional standards and led by example, however 53% felt that they did not (previously 40% reported high standards being set).

- 78% of employees disagreed that managers in BFRS promote a blame free culture, 73% disagreed that staff are encouraged to say what they think, 69% disagreed that poor performance is adequately dealt with, 69% disagree that reasoning is used effectively and 68% disagreed that action is taken on views expressed.

- 25% of employees disagreed that it is fair to provide women and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds with some appropriate facilities to assist their particular needs if required.

- 33% of employees disagreed that they are able to balance their working life with their home life (previously 23% of employees disagreed).

- 37% of employees who stated they might want/need to apply for a work-life balance arrangement thought that it is unlikely that a their request would be considered.

- 32% of employees disagreed that everyone is given equal access to training.

- 45% disagreed that everyone is given equal access to promotion opportunities (which is consistent with 46% from 2014/15).

- Of the employees who reported not having had an appraisal within the last 12 months, 38% of employees reported not having an appraisal planned within the next 6 months.

- 36% of employees disagreed that during watch, station or team meetings they have opportunities to learn about what is happening nationally during watch, station or team meetings.

- 29% of employees reported not having regular watch, station or team meetings.

- 25% of employees disagreed that there has been an improvement in the last 2 years regarding how they previously received information (compared with 20% in 2014/15).

5   OUTCOMES BY THEMES

5.1   Equality in the Workplace

Key indicators

5.1.1   Less than half (48%) of staff reported that they are satisfied with their present job. This compares with 60% reporting that they are satisfied in 2014/15. However 88% of staff believe their job is worthwhile (see para 5.8.1). No further questions are provided within the report to qualify satisfaction impacts.

5.1.2   Significantly 92% of staff reported that they feel valued as an employee by their team, which represents a 5% improvement on 2014/15 and 84% feel valued by their line manager, which represents an improvement of 6%.

5.1.3   However 64% of employees disagreed that they feel valued as an employee by senior management, which represents a decrease of 13% from 2014/15, and 55% disagreed that they feel valued by middle management, which represents a decrease of 12% from 2014/15.

5.1.4   45% of employees agreed that they are normally treated fairly at work, a decrease of 12% over 2014/15, while 38% of employees disagreed with this statement.

5.1.5 Of the 38% that disagreed, 27% of those stating they disagreed because of age (previously 17%), 24% because of gender (previously 14%), 20% because of a perceived difference in treatment between lower and higher management, and 7% because of race/ethnicity/nationality (previously 11%).

5.1.6 In 2014/15 those feeling they receive unfair treatment because of a union membership represented 51% which has reduced to 31% (a decrease of 20%) in 2017, however the feeling of unfair treatment based on being an operational member of staff has increased from 44% to 59% (an increase of 15%).

Additional Commentary

5.1.7 89% of staff believe they can express views to colleagues openly and without fear, while just over three quarters of employees agreed that they can express their views and opinions to their line manager (80%) and Supervisory staff (76%) in this way.

5.1.8 This is encouraging and supports effective communication throughout BFRS, particularly within teams.

5.1.9 However, only 16% of employees agreed that they can express their views and opinions to Senior Management openly and 24% agreed that they can express their views to Middle Management in this way. This reflects a change of 16% against 2014/15 (from 32%) for senior managers and 12% (from 36%) for middle managers.

5.1.10 Views provided as to reasons to why views are not openly shared include a fear of retribution, managers not accepting different opinion, criticism or challenge, not being listened to and a feeling of bullying tactics by managers.

5.1.11 Subjective feedback from Senior Managers that have undertaken station, watch and/or departmental meetings recently have presented a contra view to the report findings; that staff are willing to engage opening and frankly on a range of subjects. More detailed analysis will be required to understand the context of the subjective commentary provided.

5.1.12 68% (an increase of 17% over 2014/15 and 20% since 2009) reported that they are likely to leave BFRS in the next 5 years, compared 32% reporting they are not likely to leave during this time period. Those choosing to stay state that they are either satisfied with their job and/or are in the younger age category (16-34 years).

5.1.13 Of those that stated they are likely to leave, the reasons provided were:
- Being dissatisfied with work-life balance (37%, an increase of 14% from 2014/15),
- Dissatisfied with local conditions (36%, an increase of 3%),
- Retirement (33%, a reduction of 3%) and
- Seeking a better paid job (25%, a reduction from 40% in 2014/15.)

5.1.14 63% of responders stated that they have worked for BFRS for more than 10 years, with another 16% working for between 5-10 years. It is known that the age profile of BFRS has increased and that nationally, specifically regarding operational personnel, there is an anticipated large number of personnel able to retire in the next 5 years. The NJC Inclusive Fire Service Group reports that 64% of the workforce is over 40 years (circular NJC/6/16 June 2016).

5.1.15 This position is complicated by the various pension schemes now operating. For BFRS, approximately 80 members of staff could leave in the next 5 years based on retirement age, which equates to 14% (data provided by HR). The 2006 and 2015 pension scheme for Grey Book personnel has a pensionable age of 60 which may account for some staff to consider other career opportunities.

5.1.16 BFRS has already seen a number of operational staff leaving the Service for other employment including moving to rail operators. In this case, a significant salary increase is proving attractive.

5.1.17 Overall however turnover rates are very low when compared with labour data; wholetime percentage turnover for 2016/17 was 3.5% compared to 15.2% private sector and 10.5% public sector (source; Xpert HR).

5.1.18 Operational vacancies are being managed through external advertising for middle and senior management roles, an effective firefighter transfer process since 2011 and foundation training for wholetime firefighters since 2016 (which attracted more than 600 applications in 2015 and has provided 33 new wholetime firefighters).

Considerations

5.1.19 The improvements are noted and further triangulation of information is required to understand the views specifically toward middle and senior managers, which has returned to a level recorded for 2009 following incremental improvement.

5.1.20 It should be noted that there remains an ongoing national dispute relating to pensions, ongoing national discussions relating to pay and conditions and local change management to support the reform agenda.

5.2 Professional Standards

Key Indicators

5.2.1 72% of employees reported that they have not personally experienced any of the listed forms of discrimination in the last two years, a positive increase from 63% in 2014/15.

5.2.2 Of those who reported they have experienced discrimination, 20% reported that they have experienced discrimination because of their age; 13% due to their gender, 5% due to disability, 4% pregnancy/maternity leave and 4% due

to their race/colour/ethnic origin/nationality. The remainder are categorised generically as another form of discrimination.

5.2.3   The overall percentages when considering discrimination are reported by ORS as:
- 72% of employees reported no experience of discrimination (improvement from 63% in 2014/15);
- 5% reported discrimination due to age (a reduction from 7% in 2014/15);
- 4% due to gender (an increase from 2% in 2014/15);
- 1% due to race, colour, ethnic origin and nationality (a reduction from 3% in 2014/15);
- 3% for other responses (includes disability, and maternity/paternity); and
- 15% due to another form of discrimination (from 13% in 2014/15).

5.2.4   80% of employees reported that they have not personally experienced any of the listed forms of harassment in the last two years, a positive increase from 70% in 2014/15.

5.2.5   64% of employees reported that they had not personally experienced any of the listed forms of bullying in the last two years.

5.2.6   2% reported bullying due to gender, 1% due to age, 2% due to other reasons, including ethnicity and disability. 32% reported it as due to 'another form of bullying' which ORS record as including rite of passage, climate of fear, being a retained firefighter and being operational staff.

5.2.7   95% of staff reported that if a colleague was being harassed, bullied or discriminated against, they would be likely to support them.

5.2.8   80% of employees agreed that their colleagues set high personal standards and lead by example, an increase of 10% over 2014/15, with a similar 79% reporting their line manager does, an increase of 8% over 2014/15). 73% of employees also agreed that supervisory staff (i.e. Watch Managers, Crew Managers and Supervisors) do this, and increase of 9% on 2014/15.

5.2.9   It is reported that only 25% of staff, a reduction from 39% in 2014/15, agree that senior management demonstrate high professional standards and 27%, from 40% in 2014/15, for middle management.

Additional Commentary

5.2.10 Of the employees that stated that they had experienced discrimination, bullying or harassment in the last two years 54% said they did not report it, which compares with 49% in 2014/15.

5.2.11 Responses as to why it was not reported are:
- a belief that nothing would change (49% in 2017, 33% in 2014/15),
- a fear of retribution (46% in 2017, 23% in 2014/15) and
- those involved were managers themselves (19% in 2017, 18% in 2014/15).

5.2.12 In 2014/15 38% of responders provided 'other' reasons which are not evidenced, compared to just 18% in 2017.

5.2.13 42% stated that they reported it informally for example with a line manager, whilst 5% said they reported it formally as a grievance and 2% as a bullying and harassment complaint.

5.2.14 HR and Equality data report no formal complaints of bullying and harassment from April 2016 – March 2017.

5.2.15 By comparison, 42% is the same for informal action in 2014/15, a similar (6%) number reporting formally as a grievance and a higher number (7%) as a bullying and harassment complaint.

5.2.16 HR and Equality data report one formal complaint of bullying and harassment for April 2015 – March 2016.

5.2.17 69% of those that reported any discrimination, bullying or harassment did not feel that the matter was dealt with effectively. This is the same level as in 2014/15. Only 10% of employees agreed that it was dealt with effectively.

5.2.18 More than half of employees disagreed with 9 out of the 11 statements regarding managers in BFRS.

5.2.19 In particular, employees disagreed that managers in BFRS:
- 78% Promote a blame free culture (an increase of 12% from 2014/15);
- 73% Encourage staff to say what they think (an increase of 15%);
- 69% Deal with poor performance (an increase of 8%);
- 69% Use reasoning rather than fear (an increase of 22%); and
- 68% Act on views expressed by staff (an increase of 10%).

5.2.20 60% of employees agreed that managers in BFRS encourage training and personal development, an increase of 1% over 2014/15.

5.2.21 ORS analysis details that those satisfied in their job and employed for 10 years or less will see the management statements positively, whilst those that declared they are dissatisfied tended to report against the management statements negatively.

5.2.22 83% of employees state that their line manager treats them fairly and with respect, which is a 1% increase over 2014/15. 76% of employees state that the line manager treats everyone with respect, and increase of 4%.

5.2.23 74% of employees reported that their manager uses the discipline process in line with Service Policy.

Considerations

5.2.24 The bullying and harassment policy and procedure (V101601) was updated in July 2016 and now includes a Managers' Guide (V101602) to assist with

applying appropriate processes and support to managers. The Managers'
Guide is explicit in BFRS position on bullying and harassment:

5.2.25 *"Bullying and harassment is not only unacceptable on moral and legal
grounds but may, if unchecked or badly handled, create serious problems …*

*Employees have the right to use this procedure if they feel that they are being
bullied or harassed. Irrespective of the outcome of any investigation or action
that may be taken, no person should be victimised as a result of making,
witnessing or supporting a complaint.*

*It is in everyone's interests to promote a safe, healthy and fair environment in
which people can work."*

5.2.26 For benchmarking, The NJC Inclusive Fire Service Cultural and Behavioural
Survey (2016) has been considered, as this was responded to by 45 Fire and
Rescue Services, which details that bullying and harassment accounts for
15% of all grievance cases between 2010-2015 *'however these are fairly
consistent over the time period and there is no evidence that bullying and
harassment is on the rise'.* The biggest cause reported for grievance cases
are against management decisions (24%).

5.2.27 Consideration should be given to ensuring that all staff are familiar with the
updated guidance available through policy and procedure, specifically the
managers guides, to support effective application and ensure confidence in
the processes.

5.3   Managing Equality

Key Indicators

5.3.1   94% of employees reported that, in their opinion, everyone is responsible for
ensuring that equality and diversity policies work effectively within BFRS.

5.3.2   84% of employees agreed that it is fair to provide people with disabilities and
79% for those with dependent children/relatives with some appropriate
facilities to assist their particular needs if required. This is an improvement of
4 and 7% respectively over 2014/15.

Additional Commentary

5.3.3   A third of employees reported that the under-representation of women (33%)
and/or people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (32%) in
BFRS should be addressed. This is a reduction over 2014/15 where it was
reported as 40% and 39% respectively.

5.3.4   57% of employees agreed that it is fair to provide people with religious/other
beliefs with appropriate facilities to suit their needs, an improvement of 1%
and 50% of staff agreed for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic
backgrounds, an improvement of 3%.

5.3.5 BFRS continues to promote itself as an inclusive employer and is taking positive action to encourage applications from all under-represented groups to ensure we truly reflect our communities. All sections of our Service are engaged in this activity; an example being recent 'have a go' events for potential wholetime firefighter applicants hosted by operational personnel.

5.3.6 83% of staff reported that they were either satisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the current provision of Equality and Diversity training and development opportunities.

5.3.7 Those with less than 10 years employment and those declaring they are satisfied with their job have responded more positively than those over 10 years and stating they are dissatisfied with their job. 10% of staff wanted access to more training however 10% stated training is not needed.

5.3.8 27% of staff report they have attended a course on diversity/cultural awareness in the past 2 years. 17% have attended courses on equal opportunities and disability.

Considerations

5.3.9 A range of training is provided to support cultural understanding and equality learning. This includes Toward Cultural Competence which is available to all personnel. It also forms an integral element to supervisory management development programmes.

5.3.10 Recently a number of free webinars have been offered through the Diversity team for any member of staff to engage with. More are planned to continually improve understanding, including on-line unconscious bias training being delivered across the Service to managers.

5.3.11 Whilst diversity and inclusion training forms a part of current induction and development programmes, a training matrix is being developed by the Diversity Team to support delivery across the whole Service.

5.4 Carers

Key Indicators

5.4.1 30% employees look after or provide help or support to family members or others suffering from physical or mental health, disabilities or problems related to old age. This is a reduction from 44% in 2014/15.

5.4.2 78% of employees with caring responsibilities reported that their current working pattern allows them to undertake their caring responsibilities. This is a positive increase from 75% in 2014/15.

5.4.3 The vast majority of employees (93%) with caring responsibilities reported that they do not intend to apply to the Service to reduce their working hours within the next 12 months. This is comparable with 2014/15 (95%).

Additional Commentary

5.4.4 Those employees most likely to report that they have caring responsibilities are female and/or are categorised as 45 years and over. Those less likely are within the age category 16-34 years.

5.4.5 The Service has adopted a 24 hour shift pattern for wholetime firefighters which provides for 72 hours off duty between shifts and has arrangements for locally arranged stand-ins for operational cover.

5.4.6 It has a range of policies that support carers which include a:
- Flexible working policy (V100514) which is supported by
- Managers' Guide (V10051401)
- Career break policy (V100516)
- Parental leave procedure (V102002) and
- Special Leave policy (V102006)

Considerations

5.4.7 Ensuring that staff continue to have access to a range of policy and procedure that supports caring for family and others.

5.5 Work-Life Balance

Key Indicators

5.5.1 51% of employees agreed that they are able to balance their working life with their home life, a further 15% neither agree nor disagree. However 33% disagreed.

5.5.2 This compares to 65% of employees that agreed to managing a work-life balance in 2014/15, with a further 12% who neither agree nor disagree. 23% disagreed.

Additional Commentary

5.5.3 More than half of employees do not think that they might want to/need to apply for 13 out of the 14 listed forms of work-life balance arrangements presented within the survey, either now or in the future.

5.5.4 Of the employees that reported that they might want or need to apply for a work-life balance arrangement now or in the future, the top six options were:
- 44% reported that they might/need to apply for special leave (37% reported in 2014/15)
- 38% for shift stand in (28% in 2014/15)
- 38% for time off in lieu (35% in 2014/15)
- 33% for dependent leave (24% in 2014/15)
- 31% for career breaks (22% in 2014/15) and
- 27% for compressed hours (26% in 2014/15)

5.5.5 Of the employees who stated they might want/need to apply for a work-life balance arrangement, 43% reported thinking that it is likely that their request would be considered fairly, which compares with 48% in 2014/15. 37% thought that it is unlikely that their request would be considered, with 33% reported it would be considered fairly in 2014/15.

5.5.6 Of those that thought their request would be treated fairly, the percentage share is:
- 26% reported as not being seen sympathetically (an increase from 7% in 2014/15)
- 23% reported support being dependent on staffing (a decrease from 35%)
- 19% reported a perceived lack of management support (an increase from 8%)

5.5.7 Support staff and staff satisfied with their present job are identified as being more likely to agree that they can manage their work-life balance and that an application to review arrangements would be considered fairly.

5.5.8 Operational staff are less likely to agree. Operational commitments do present specific challenges however there are numerous examples where adjustments have been considered and applied specific to operational roles, for example shared shifts within Service Control and stand-in arrangements.

Considerations

5.5.9 As detailed within 5.4 BFRS provides a range of policy and procedure to support staff to achieving urgent leave requests, appropriate cover arrangements and flexible working.

5.6 Personal Development

Key Indicators

5.6.1 The overall results show a positive view toward personal development. All employees were asked whether they agree or disagree with a set of 7 statements about their attitude to work. Significantly:
- 100% of staff accept responsibility for their performance
- 99% state they learn from their experiences
- 99% consider constructive criticism
- 98% consider themselves open minded and
- 97% state they strive for excellence.

5.6.2 89% indicated that they had received an appraisal in the past year. This is a significant improvement from 75% for 2014/15.

5.6.3 HR data provided for actual appraisal returns for 2016/17 indicate that the figure for all staff is 100% for operational personnel Watch Manager and below and 94% for Support roles and Station Manager and above.

5.6.4 81% of employees reported that they have not been unfairly refused training within the last two years. This compares to 87% reported in 2014/15.

5.6.5 52% of employees agreed that everyone is given equal access to training, which compares to 58% for 2014/15. 32% disagreed with this statement, compared with 29% in 2014/15.

5.6.6 87% stated that they had not been unfairly passed over for promotion within the last two years. This is an improvement of 2% over 2014/15 and a 5% improvement over 2009.

5.6.7 Of the employees who reported feeling that they have been unfairly passed over for promotion within the last two years, 27% reported that this was due belonging to a union, which is a significant reduction from the previous 54% in 2014/15.

5.6.8 This change in relation to union membership compares with a similar reduction relating to fairness within 5.1.1. This could be indicative of improvements in the national political landscape between the two survey periods.

Additional Commentary

5.6.9 61% of employees reported that if a progression position was available to them they would be interested in applying for it, which is consistent with 2014/15 and 2011/12.

5.6.10 Employees who said that they would not be interested in applying for a progression position if it was available to them were asked why this was the case. These are:
- 43% said that they did not want the extra responsibility/work or a promotion, which compares to 44% in 2014/15
- 28% said that there are no suitable posts available, which compares with 5% for 2014/15
- 15% stated too late in career, compares to 26% for 2014/15
- 10% stated general dissatisfaction (no comparison for 2014/15)
- 8% stated not interested, compares with 17% in 2014/15
- 20% covers 'other' which accounted for 38% in 2014/15

5.6.11 Of those employees that stated they received an appraisal in the last 12 months, 82% stated that the person conducting the appraisal provided the opportunity to have their say, indicating a two way approach.

5.6.12 76% of staff stated that the person conducting the appraisal identified training needs with them, a reduction of 10% from 2014/15, with 69% stating advance information was provided, a reduction of 12% from 2014/15.

5.6.13 Staff can request access to training through a variety of processes, which include annual appraisal, Continual Professional Development (CPD), promotion and progression. Requests are usually submitted via an FSRT35 written request, which identifies the training/development, provides detail of attendees and organisational benefit, and requires line management

evidenced support before the Training and Development Manager considers approval.

5.6.14 In 2016/17 a total of 127 applications for external training, learning and development were submitted with all but 3 being supported. By comparison, in 2015/16 a total of 158 applications were submitted with all but 4 being supported. These are reviewed by the Training and Development Management team and reported to the Diversity team for further analysis and reporting.

Considerations

5.6.15 Training support is available for new managers to benefit effective appraisal delivery, a policy and procedure exists to support appraisals (V100510) which is supported by a Managers' Guide (V10051001) both were updated in June 2016.

5.6.16 All appraisals are quality assured through the line manager process with comment added prior to transfer to HR, therefore further analysis may be required to understand whether there is a reduction in effectiveness.

5.7   Organisational Growth

Key Indicators

5.7.1   90% of employees reported having heard of BFRS' objectives, 88% its Vision and Virtues. These are lower than 2014/15 but remain significantly above levels in 2009.

5.7.2   75% of employees agreed that if they contacted BFRS as a member of the public they are confident that they would receive a good service, although this is a decrease of 7% since 2014/15.

5.7.3   Public satisfaction rates from BFRS engagement is routinely reported at CMT and FRA meetings as 99% or better.

Additional Commentary

5.7.4   61% agreed that BFRS understands the needs of its communities, a reduction of 4% over 2014/15 but remaining higher than 2011/12.

5.7.5   Of the 48 staff members that provided further detail on community understanding, ORS has recorded:
  • 22% said that it was because public consultations are loaded/ask questions to give certain answers compared with 28% from 2014/15
  • 13% said they disagreed because managers ignore public opinion compared with 5% in 2014/15 and
  • 8% sighted budget priorities, not considered in 2014/15.

5.7.6   74% recorded as 'other' which requires further triangulation.

5.7.7 71% of employees reported having regular watch, station or team meetings where there are opportunities to learn about that is happening within the Service. This is positive however is a reduction of 5% from 2014/15.

5.7.8 When employees were asked how they currently receive most information about current issues in BFRS, 82% reported that they currently receive most information from the Blue Bulletin, which remains consistent with 2014/15 (85%). This was followed by electronic mail, informal conversations with colleagues and watch/team/other meetings.

5.7.9 Only 16% of employees (a significant decrease of 9% over 2014/15) agreed that there has been an improvement in the last 2 years regarding how they previously received information. However a high proportion (59%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

5.7.10 ORS report that those who report that they are satisfied with their job are significantly more likely to agree, while those who are not satisfied with their job and who are female are significantly less likely to agree.

5.7.11 The report states that 66% staff would prefer more face to face information with their manager, with a similar number also preferring watch/station/team meetings, with Blue Bulletin following electronic mail in preference. This remains consistent with 2014/15.

5.7.12 For operational personnel, key safety critical messages and updates have recently been presented through LearnPro, which supports the interest in electronic communications. This also makes receiving information flexible to a diverse workforce.

5.7.13 Of interest is that Core Brief was only supported by 6% of staff as a preferred communication model and 26% supporting the use of the Intranet. Whilst face to face with line managers were seen as the most preferred, there was only a 25% preference for management Briefing Sessions. A reason for this may be the focus of such events, where those that have had opportunity to engage them may consider them more beneficial than others.

Considerations

5.7.14 Watch/station/team meetings are to be encouraged to ensure that important organisational messages are effectively communicated to all staff. A communication strategy and action plan is in place to improve communications.

5.8 Job Satisfaction

Key Indicators

5.8.1 88% of employees said that they believe that their job is worthwhile. This remains high however it is a 5% decrease from 2014/15.

5.8.2   When employees were asked what they enjoy most about their job 79% reported that they enjoy helping people, 78% enjoy working in a team and 72% said that they enjoyed serving the community.

5.8.3   When employees were asked what they enjoy least about their job, 19% stated threats from colleagues and management, 16% feeling undervalued, 16% stated high workloads.

5.8.4   Negative comments from managers had been the least enjoyed element of an employee's job in 2014/15 at 30%, followed by political interference at 18%. Negative comments have fallen to 16% and political interference has fallen to 6% in 2017. High workloads had previously only been reported by 6% of staff in 2014/15.

Additional Commentary

5.8.5   Employees were asked what, if anything, would increase employees' satisfaction with their job. 22% was positive feedback and wanting to feel valued / appreciated. 20% suggested having less managers, 16% suggesting a pay increase.

5.8.6   Pay remains a low reported outcome when staff consider what they most enjoy about work at 14%, down from 18% in 2014/15

5.8.7   Employees were asked what they consider the most important factors in maintaining their commitment at work. These include:
- 43% of employees regarded positive feedback as most important factor, also top at 34% in 2014/15
- 17% stated teamwork which was reported by 16% in 2014/15
- 11% stated a happy workplace (which did not register in 2014/15) and
- 9% stated having a good work-life balance which was reported by 7% in 2014/15

Considerations

5.8.8   A national pay review has been ongoing as part of NJC review of conditions and a widening of the firefighter role. The outcomes of this, and a resolution on a national pension dispute, are expected shortly.

6.   NEXT STEPS

6.1   Initial Communication

6.1.1   There has been an excellent level of engagement in the Employee Survey 2017 with 370 people responding; almost two-thirds of our staff. Therefore, the survey gives a strong insight into the strengths of the Service and the issues it faces moving forward. There is significant information to consider within this report and communicating this to the Service will be important.

6.1.2   A detailed review of the draft report is required to ensure accuracy and provide any feedback to ORS prior to sharing to wider staff groups.

6.1.3   The initial communication plan is defined below:

	Action	Timescale
1	CMT to receive a summary paper of key findings, additional comments and considerations based on the draft ORS report	September 2017
2	Representative Bodies engagement to discuss outcomes	October 2017
3	All Staff executive summary response to be communicated through Blue Bulletin	October 2017
4	Formal FRA engagement through Policy and Challenge meeting	December 2017

6.1.4   It is envisaged that further Service wide communication would follow on from these to inform on the progress.

6.2   Qualitative Research

6.2.1   During 30 October and 2 November 2017 IODA Ltd were invited in to provide a series of focus groups and semi structured interviews with our staff as part of qualitative research and triangulation of the data provided from the Employee Opinion Survey.

6.2.2   The themes of the focus groups and interviews were:
- Gain a deeper understanding of what has been working effectively, including how to maintain and develop those areas:
- Identify areas for improvement; and
- Additional themes that emerge from the qualitative research

6.2.3   A total of 64 staff engaged with two researchers from IODA Ltd during the events, which included middle and supervisory managers, operational and support staff. These events were hosted at a number of venues across the county to ensure that staff were able to engage fully and in confidence.

6.2.4   On conclusion, an initial verbal feedback was provided by IODA Ltd with a report to follow. It is expected that the report will provide some recommendations to complement the action plan developed in response to the Employee Opinion Survey.

7. ACTION PLAN

7.1 Actions achieved from 2014/15

	ACTION	OWNER	EVIDENCE	COMPLETE / REVIEW DATE
1	Carry out a review of FSRT35 applications including reason for refusal	HTD	Complete - Annual review established by TDM reported to HRP&CG and Diversity team	Jun 2016
2	Carry out training needs analysis	HTD	Complete - Equality input embedded into induction and development programmes	Jun 2016
3	Review of professional standards to take account responses	DA	Complete - Induction updated to include professional standards at work. Confirm content in development programmes. E&D training matrix being developed	Mar 2016
4	Review the Equality and Diversity Induction – to incorporate Unconscious Bias (UB) training	DA/HTD	Complete - On-line module to support UB training sourced, for delivery 2017 Embed UB to appropriate development programmes and induction.	Mar 2016
5	Review the recruitment and selection process – to incorporate Unconscious Bias training	DA/HTD	Complete - On-line module to support UB training sourced, for delivery 2017	Mar 2016

7.2   Action for 2017/18

	ACTION	OWNER	EVIDENCE	COMPLETE / REVIEW
1	Review of draft Staff Survey report	DA	Complete - Conducted by HSP	Sep 2017
2	Produce a key findings report for CMT	DA/HSP	Complete - Presented to CMT 7 Sep 2017	Sep 2017
3	Initiate independent focus group work to consider outcomes and present options for change	DA/HSP	Complete – Commissioned and Conducted by Ioda Ltd	Oct 2017
4	Initial staff engagement through representative bodies and employee groups	HSP	Complete - HSP met with FBU 25 Sep 2017 and 25 Oct 2017	Oct 2017
5	Training delivery timescales planned to include unconscious bias and Inclusive Leadership	DA/HSP	Complete - Unconscious Bias learning sent to identified managers progress monitoring through Diversity A review of Inclusive Leadership undertaken for delivery in 2018	Oct 2017
6	Initial report of outcomes to Corporate Equality Group (CEG)	DA/HSP	Complete - Presented to CEG 16 Oct 2017	Oct 2017
7	Report to HR Policy and Challenge meeting	DA/HSP	Meeting now 11 Jan 2018 – paper prepared by HSP	Dec 2017
8	Following triangulation of further information, an extended action plan to be developed for delivery across 2017-2019	DA/HSP	Commencing January 2018	Dec 2017

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