

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO: MEETING OF THE	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	26TH JULY 2012
REPORT NO.	CFO/108/12
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING, DEB APPLETON, X4402
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	¹IDEAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
SUBJECT:	THE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – A REVIEW OF THE IDEAS SCHEME

IS THIS REPORT EXEMPT? NO

ARE THERE ANY APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT? YES

APPENDIX	A	TITLE	Examples of successful ideas from the IDEAS scheme
	B		Terms of Reference for the Improvement Scheme
	C		Application form for the Improvement Scheme
	D		Equality Impact Assessment

ATTACHED – ELECTRONIC / HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members consider the recommendations of this report relating to changes to the purpose and operation of the IDEAS Scheme.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a) Scrutinise the implications of the proposal to close the IDEAS Scheme and introduce a new improvement scheme that is intended to better reflect the current requirements and resources of the Authority whilst still improving outcomes for our communities,
 - b) If satisfied with the proposals, Members are requested to :

¹ DCFO (Chair), Cllr Rennie, Director of Strategic Planning, Head of Finance, Stn Manager Ops Equipment, Head of Strategic Support, IDEAS administrator and Programme and Project Manager

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- c) approve the implementation of the new scheme
- d) Scrutinise the operation of the improvement scheme at the next meeting of this committee
- e) Recommend any task and finish work that might need to be undertaken arising from the scrutiny process

Introduction & Background

3. The IDEAS Scheme (Initiatives Delivering Excellence and Safety) was set up in 2008. It was established to provide a means of engaging with staff to encourage innovative suggestions that would improve efficiency, deliver improved safety and make financial savings. In a move away from MFRA's traditional approach to suggestion schemes, it gave financial rewards to staff who submitted successful ideas. In cases where the idea resulted in a financial saving to the Authority, the award was a percentage of that saving over three years (10%, 5%, 5%). At that time the Scheme was developed and managed by a part time Innovations Manager. In 2010, a restructure saw the deletion of the post and the administrative workload absorbed into the Programme and Projects section of the current Strategic Planning directorate.
4. Over 660 ideas have been submitted to the IDEAS scheme since it began and 45 of those have been successful and implemented. A further 79 ideas were not implemented (for a number of reasons) but the originator received a £25 encouragement award because the idea had some merit. The scheme has paid out £11,275 in awards from 2008 to January 2012 and has delivered £50,000 of savings to the Authority, with ongoing savings of over £10,000 per year, as well as several health and safety and efficiency savings (examples at Appendix A). The largest payment for a single submission was £2,350. This was for an idea to streamline the annual kit issue which has saved the Authority approximately £13,500 per year since its implementation in 2009.
5. The quality and number of applications to the scheme and consequently, the amount paid out in awards has diminished in recent years. Because ideas related to conditions of service and the originator's own work are specifically excluded from the scheme, it is considered that the scope for further major ideas for savings or improvements are limited. As the Authority's financial situation is considerably worse than it was in 2008, it is not considered appropriate to continue to make financial awards to staff in this way.

Proposal – The Improvement Scheme

6. In the time since the IDEAS scheme was established MFRA has changed considerably, not least as a result of the severe budget pressures it faces. It is now considered that the IDEAS scheme in its current format has delivered all the benefits it can to the Authority and that a new approach could deliver more effective outcomes at a lower cost. The proposed scheme will help to engage staff in delivering improvements within their own section of the organisation as well as the broader Service.

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7. The Improvement Scheme would allow all staff to make suggestions about any area of the Service (including local conditions of service and their own work areas), but the rewards would not be financial. Instead it is proposed that a system of developing tailored rewards packages be adopted. This could include personal and professional development related to the proposed improvement, such as a place on the project team implementing the suggestion, best practice sharing visits to other organisations or time spent with appropriate staff. In addition, any member of staff would be able to cite suggestions they had put forward as evidence of engagement, enthusiasm and innovation in their annual appraisal. Because of the inclusion of suggestions about an individual's own work area in the new scheme, the process will involve suggestions being considered by line managers in the first instance. However, it is still considered important to maintain a centrally administered scheme to ensure that the scheme's criteria are applied objectively and that overall benefits and issues can be identified and reported as necessary.

8. It is proposed that the new scheme needs to retain an overall managed process and a multidisciplinary panel to approve suggestions, establish rewards, ensure consistency and share best practice. The members of this panel should reflect the increased focus on conditions of service and personally tailored rewards and would, for example, include a senior manager from POD. The Improvement Scheme would still be administered by the Strategic Planning Directorate. The proposed terms of reference are detailed in Appendix C.

Equality & Diversity Implications

9. The Equality Impact Assessment is attached at appendix D. Proportionately, slightly more men than women received awards under the old scheme, but these differences are not significant. The new scheme allows staff to receive a reward that will assist them in their work or professional or personal development whilst also benefiting the organisation. We would continue to monitor the take up of the new scheme.

Staff Implications

10. Staff would no longer have an opportunity to receive a financial award for a suggestion but instead would receive a reward more tailored to their submission and their contribution could be recognised and acknowledged through the appraisal process.

Legal Implications

11. There are no specific legal implications resulting from this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

12. Ending the financial reward aspect of the IDEAS scheme will deliver annual savings of £10,500.

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Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

13. There are no health and safety or environmental implications resulting from the proposals.

Contribution to **Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters**

14. This proposal represents a contribution to the Authority's saving target and encourages innovation and staff engagement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

List any supporting documents/evidence here

***Glossary of Terms**

Please list any acronyms used within this Report and appendices, including their meaning.

Examples of successful ideas

Annual Kit Issue

Submission:

“Part or all the Annual kit issue should be abolished and replaced for a one for one policy, which must not exceed the annual issue. This should especially be for shoes and PE kit. Operational personnel also receive Annual kit issues just before they retire, this must also be closely regulated on a database.”

Outcome:

Savings approx £13,500 pa

A CLT report was devised to recommend the changes and a letter of intent to FBU also sent Nov 2008

A temporary instruction was compiled Feb 2009.

Savings from Powering Down PCs

Submission:

“E-mail all PC users with a clear pdf document giving them instructions on how to right click on PC desktop and set PC power scheme to power down both screen and HDD after 20 minutes idle.”

Outcome:

Service Headquarters and TDA have had the power policy applied, and it has been decided that Derby Road and Stations, due to their 24 hour working should not have the policy applied at this stage due to the risk PCs being shut down after 15 minutes of inactivity if officers get mobilised and work being lost.

Savings approx. £3550.00pa

Rapid Glass Management

Submission

“At all RTCs glass management using the tape gun is slow, very awkward and wastes valuable minutes of the golden hour.

Cover the window in one hit by applying a roll of highly sticky back plastic. This takes seconds to apply, keeps the glass fragmentation to an absolute minimum. No known disadvantages”

Outcome:

Investigative work surrounding the stowage of plastic rolls on appliances completed. Plastic rolls procured and issued-Nov 2009

Steering wheel “Do Not Remove” sign for RAG

Submission

“When a vehicle is being used as an anchor point with rope access gear there is a possibility it could be driven off, so causing death or injury to the RAG operator.” A sign on the steering wheel would prevent this.

Outcome

Item designed and procured.

Service Instruction amended.-2009

Weatherproof crew Debriefing Area:

Submission

“When at large incidents where numbers of BA teams are committed we brief and collate information with an incident management case made of fabric which needs to be placed on the ground and the nominated person positioned on his knees to write the information on the white board. Sometimes this is over a long period at a protracted incident.

An Initial set up in near vicinity of the BA board consisting of a Gazebo type structure preferably weatherproof is proposed. A folding table or white board on an easel to collate or give information. Teams would be briefed on entry or after collecting their tallies and could report to the briefing officer to exchange information in a dry controlled environment”

Outcome:

Shortlist of suitable structures has been selected, which are also undergoing investigations to ascertain their capability with the proposed new Incident Command vehicles. Suitable product sought and purchased - 2011

284 Rescue Harness

Submission

“Rescue of a person from a building on fire is extremely arduous for both the firefighter and casualty. The development of a rescue harness to put the casualty in and make removal much easier and safer for all involved is proposed.

The improvements would be to reduce injuries to firefighters and make removal of casualties from fires much safer and speedier.”

Outcome

The replacement harnesses have now been ordered and work is ongoing with Rope Supervisors from the Search & Rescue Team to determine how to best introduce additional visibility on these.-Jan 2011

Savings from IDEAS

The following savings have resulted from the IDEAS scheme:

Suggestion	Approx. savings/income delivered (2008-2011)	Ongoing savings
Changes to kit Replacement processes	£40,000	£10,000 p.a
Removal of Paper Towels	£2,000	0 (reintroduced in 2009)
Grand National Car Parking	£1,500	0 (no longer feasible)
Elimination of paper statements	£12,000	£3,000 p.a
Changes to provision of portaloos	£4,000	£1,000 p.a
Fuel Cards	£500	£500 p.a

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority *[Once approved this will be published as a Service instruction]*

Improvement Scheme

Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. The Improvement Scheme is designed to encourage staff to make suggestions about any area of the Service (including conditions of service and their own work areas). Suggestions could include improving health and safety, improving efficiency or making savings.
2. The rewards for successful suggestions will be tailored to the individual or group concerned. This could include personal and professional development related to the proposed improvement or a place on the project team implementing the suggestion.
3. In addition, any member of staff would be able to cite suggestions they had put forward as evidence of engagement, enthusiasm and innovation in their annual appraisal.
4. Because of the inclusion an individual's own work area in the scheme, the process will involve such suggestions being considered by line managers in the first instance. However, the overall process will be centrally administered to ensure that the scheme's criteria are applied objectively and that overall benefits and issues can be identified and reported as necessary.
5. The process will include evaluation by an officer with knowledge of the work area concerned and final approval and agreement of any reward package will be the responsibility of the multidisciplinary Improvement Panel. This Panel will also ensure consistency and share best practice.

Submitting a Suggestion

6. Employees who wish to submit a suggestion to the Improvement Scheme will complete the attached form. Submissions can be from individuals or groups
7. Applicants should provide sufficient information for an evaluator to consider the merits of the suggestion. The evaluators will not be expected to carry out their own research.
8. The completed application should be submitted via the Portal to [the scheme administrator] in Strategic Planning. Staff without access to the Portal can send an application through the internal mail system, marked for the attention of [the scheme administrator]

9. All suggestions that are about an individual's own work area will be sent by the scheme administrator to the individual's line manager in the first instance.
10. All suggestions will receive evaluation by a member of staff with knowledge of the area concerned
11. Evaluated suggestions will be considered by the Improvement Scheme Panel.
12. Where the Panel chooses to accept a suggestion they will consider appropriate rewards for the individual or group that has submitted the suggestion.
13. The scheme administrator will inform the applicant of the outcome of their submission.
14. The scheme administrator will aim to provide a response to an applicant on the outcome of their submission within 15 weeks of receipt. If there is likely to be any undue delays you will be kept informed.

Appendix A to Item 4 on the Agenda**The Improvement Scheme [this will be set up as a form on the Portal]****Application Form – submit via the Portal to [Scheme administrator] Strategic Planning**

Staff without access to a computer can send an application through the internal mail system, marked for the attention of [the scheme administrator]

	Question	Response
	<i>Applicant details</i>	
1	Name/s	
2	Role	
3	Service Number	
3	Location (and department where appropriate)	
4	Contact details	
	<i>Suggestion details</i>	
5	<p>Is the suggestion about your own work area (this includes your department)?</p> <p>If yes, please include details of your line manager</p>	
6	<p>Provide details of your suggestion and how it will benefit the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe Issue That Idea Is Addressing • Main Business Area Affected 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe Solution That You Are Proposing• Details of Costs or Savings <p>Remember to include enough information for an evaluator to understand what you are proposing, what the benefits are and what costs or savings there may be.</p> <p>Attach additional information if required.</p>	

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
Equality Impact Assessment Form

Title of policy/report/project:	Suggestions for Improvements – a review of the IDEAS scheme
Department:	Strategic Planning
Date:	1/6/12
<p>1: What is the aim or purpose of the policy/report/project</p> <p><i>This should identify “the legitimate aim” of the policy/report/project (there may be more than one)</i></p>	
<p>To review the existing IDEAS (staff suggestion) scheme and to develop a scheme that better suits the current needs of MFRA.</p> <p>IDEAS stands for Initiatives Delivering Excellence And Safety</p>	
<p>2: Who will be affected by the policy/report/project?</p> <p><i>This should identify the persons/organisations who may need to be consulted about the policy /report/project and its outcomes (There may be more than one)</i></p>	
<p>All staff working for MFRA will potentially be affected by the proposed changes as they are all eligible to submit suggestions to the current scheme.</p>	
<p>3. Monitoring</p> <p><i>Summarise the findings of any monitoring data you have considered regarding this policy/report/project. This could include data which shows whether the it is having the desired outcomes and also its impact on members of different equality groups.</i></p>	
What monitoring data have you considered?	Please see attached:
Gender and employment type of IDEAS award	More awards have been made to male uniformed staff than any other group, but this is largely to be expected as they are the largest group. However the female

winners	firefighting staff rewarded represents only 2.3% compared to the 5% of female firefighters employed by the Service. Male and female non uniformed recipients of awards also show a slightly increased proportion of men receiving awards. Men received 55% of the awards against an employment representation of 45%
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<p>4: Research</p> <p><i>Summarise the findings of any research you have considered regarding this policy/report/project. This could include quantitative data and qualitative information; anything you have obtained from other sources e.g. CFOA/CLG guidance, other FRSs, etc</i></p>	
<p>What research have you considered?</p> <p>The initial set up of the IDEAS scheme included extensive research of other schemes.</p> <p>This review has considered the way in which the IDEAS scheme has operated and the impact it has had on the Service.</p> <p>Whilst carrying out the review consideration has been given to the nature of bids received, the savings that have been achieved and the awards given.</p>	<p>What did it show?</p> <p>The IDEAS scheme for the first time offered financial rewards for suggestions to save money, improve efficiency, provide better services or improve health and safety and followed a model used in the armed forces.</p> <p>660 IDEAS were submitted to the scheme between 2008 and 2012 of which 69 were successful, with their originators receiving a financial reward. A further 98 IDEAS received an encouragement award of £25, but their IDEA was not successful, for a variety of reasons. Overall, £50,000 of savings have been delivered with £10,000 per year savings still ongoing.</p> <p>Despite the success above, it is clear that the major savings were achieved in the scheme's early years and both the volume and quality of submissions has diminished more recently. In addition, the payment of rewards to staff for suggestions, is now less acceptable as the Authority faces significant budgets cuts.</p> <p>There is however, still a need for a vehicle to process staff suggestions to improve efficiency, services and safety as well as to encourage staff engagement and the review proposes a new scheme with a non financial reward system. The new scheme will also allow staff to make suggestions about their own work area and conditions of service, both of which were specifically excluded from the IDEAS scheme. It is thought that by allowing suggestions from these areas, real improvements can be made.</p>

<p>5. Consultation</p> <p><i>Summarise the opinions of any consultation. Who was consulted and how? (This should include reference to people and organisations identified in section 2 above)</i></p> <p><i>Outline any plans to inform consultees of the results of the consultation</i></p>	
<p>What Consultation have you undertaken?</p> <p>IDEAS committee</p> <p>SMG and other staff involved with the scheme</p>	<p>What did it say?</p> <p>IDEAS committee commissioned the review following a notable downturn in both the quality and quantity of submissions to the scheme. The committee considered the review on 1st June 2012 and approved the proposal to change the scheme.</p> <p>SMG expressed a view that it was no longer appropriate for the Authority to give financial rewards for staff suggestions and also felt that in some cases, the length of time taken by staff to evaluate submissions was disproportionate to the value of those suggestions.</p> <p>There were differing opinions from staff who evaluate suggestions. Some agreed with the SMG assessment and others thought that there had been more value from suggestions.</p> <p>Staff who administer the scheme agreed that the quality and quantity of submissions had waned and that staff submitting ideas were not generally putting a great deal of thought or effort into their submissions.</p>

6. Conclusions

Taking into account the results of the monitoring, research and consultation, set out how the policy/report/project impacts or could impact on people from the following protected groups? (Include positive and/or negative impacts)

In general the change from a scheme that gives financial rewards to one that provides a more tailored package of non financial rewards and recognition will mean that a number of staff who would otherwise have received a financial reward will no longer receive this. However, these awards were not contractual and always awarded on merit. As a result, there would not have been an expectation amongst staff that they would receive a financial reward. The new scheme allows staff to receive a reward that will assist them in their work or professional or personal development whilst also benefiting the organisation.

(a) Age

No analysis has been carried out on the age of staff submitting successful ideas but as the majority of staff are within the age range of 25 to 55 this is the group which will continue to submit ideas in the new scheme.

(b) Disability including mental, physical and sensory conditions)

It is not considered that disabled staff will be disadvantaged by the new scheme, but this will be actively considered as the scheme is developed.

(c) Race (include: nationality, national or ethnic origin and/or colour)

It is not considered that an individual's race will have any impact on the operation or outcomes of the scheme.

(d) Religion or Belief

It is not considered that an individual's religion or belief will have any impact on the operation or outcomes of the scheme.

(e) Sex (include gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity)

The majority of recipients of financial rewards were male and these rewards will no longer be given. It is considered that women were slightly under represented in the receipt of financial awards from the IDEAS scheme and making the new scheme appeal to all staff will be considered as it is developed.

(f) Sexual Orientation

It is not considered that an individual's orientation will have any impact on the operation or outcomes of the scheme.

(g) Socio-economic disadvantage

It is not considered that socio economic disadvantage will have any impact on the operation or outcomes of the scheme.

7. Decisions

*If the policy/report/project will have a negative impact on members of one or more of the protected groups, explain how it will change or why it is to continue in the same way.
If no changes are proposed, the policy/report/project needs to be objectively justified as being an appropriate and necessary means of achieving the legitimate aim set out in 1 above.*

8. Equality Improvement Plan

List any changes to our policies or procedures that need to be included in the Equality Action Plan/Service Plan.

9. Equality & Diversity Sign Off

The completed EIA form must be signed off by the Diversity Manager before it is submitted to Strategic Management Group or Authority.

Signed off by: **Date:**

Action Planned	Responsibility of	Completed by

For any advice, support or guidance about completing this form please contact the DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk or on 0151 296 4237

The completed form along with the related policy/report/project document should be emailed to the Diversity Team at: DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk

