

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 DECEMBER 2025	REPORT NO:	CFO/29/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, NICK MERNOCK	REPORT AUTHOR:	DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, NICK MERNOCK
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & PROCUREMENT, MIKE REA HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, RIA GROVES HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES, MIKE PILKINGTON STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	RELOCATION ASSISTANCE POLICY		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	RELOCATION ASSISTANCE POLICY
	APPENDIX B:	EIA

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members approve the publication of a Relocation Assistance Policy to support ongoing external recruitment.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
 - a) note the content of the report; and
 - b) approve the Relocation Assistance Policy.

Introduction and Background

3. Our People Plan 2024-27 outlines how we intend to “*Explore all avenues for increasing the diversity of our workforce by building upon and strengthening existing positive action initiatives to ensure that we can attract a diverse range of talent*” under the overarching key theme of **Attracting and Retaining the best people**.
4. Accordingly, the Authority’s approach to recruitment is structured to attract a wide and varied pool of applicants for all roles. This approach includes the

consideration and removal, wherever possible, of any potential barriers that may prevent talented applicants from applying for roles.

5. For some operational roles such as Firefighter, Crew Manager & Watch Manager, there is no longer any absolute requirement to reside within the Merseyside county boundary as the suite of available duty patterns the Authority operates allows for such recruits to be allocated to stations/duty patterns that take account of home address and the ability to provide retained operational cover.
6. However, feedback received from potential applicants has indicated that for other roles, specifically those where there is a need to provide Senior Officer (Station Manager and above) operational command cover (responding to larger and more complex incidents out of hours), that the necessary requirement of having to live within a 45 minute isochrone of Service Headquarters is a barrier for potential applicants who do not currently reside in, or near to Merseyside, and may be unable to commit to move due to financial constraints.
7. Whilst such operational requirements are necessary to ensure effective operational response, officers have explored options that may assist in reducing barriers for external applicants.
8. Under existing national provisions, employers are legally able to offer financial support to newly appointed employees who they require to relocate in order to meet the specific needs of a particular role within an organisation.
9. Under these provisions, certain qualifying relocation costs such as: removal and storage costs; stamp duty, legal, survey, auctioneer, search, and land registry fees; estate agent and advertising charges; temporary accommodation; and rent and tenancy deposits, can, if supported by the employer, be exempt from tax and national insurance charges, subject to specific criteria and up to a specific amount.
10. The Relocation Assistance Policy is contained in Appendix A. The policy has been drafted in full accordance with the national provisions and outlines the criteria applicable for accessing relocation assistance support.
11. The Chief Fire Officer and/or Director of People & Organisational Development are ultimately responsible for agreeing whether a particular role is eligible under the policy. Where a role has been deemed eligible, this will be included in the recruitment advert / candidate pack.
12. The eligibility criteria, as detailed in the policy, where relocation assistance may be offered for a role outlines that :
 - The employee's current main residence is more than 45 minutes at normal road speeds from Service HQ, L30 4YD; and
 - The employee is required to provide operational cover; and/or
 - The role being recruited for has been deemed as critical.

13. In line with HMRC guidance, to be eligible for relocation assistance under this policy, the employee must change their main residence, and this new main residence will be within the necessary isochrone. In addition, the relocation costs must be incurred, or the relocation benefits provided, before the end of the PAYE year following the one in which the employee takes up the new post.
14. The draft policy document provides further details of the processes that would be followed and relevant internal governance arrangements in place.
15. At the Authority meeting on 23rd October 2025, Members approved publication of the 2024/25 Equality Diversity & Inclusion report alongside the updated Workforce and Employment Data report.
16. During the meeting, Members were updated as to the ongoing positive progress the Authority is making with regards to increasing diversity and reducing underrepresentation across the workforce. Members reiterated the ongoing commitment of the Authority to our equality, diversity, and inclusion aims.
17. The availability of a Relocation Assistance Policy that removes potential barriers for particular roles that can prove difficult to recruit into will expand the scope of quality applications received, alongside contributing to the objectives within Authority's People Plan, and further supporting our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Equality and Diversity Implications

18. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed alongside the development of the policy, a copy of the same is contained in Appendix B. Access and usage of the policy will be monitored as part of this impact assessment.
19. Whilst the relocation package will only be attached to specific posts that meet the necessary criteria and available to successful candidates who would have to relocate, all roles will remain open to any candidate internal or external who meets with the role eligibility criteria.

Staff Implications

20. The Authority continues work towards being reflective of the communities we serve and utilises a variety of options to attain this including both continually developing and supporting internal growth and promotion, as well as remaining open and attractive to external applicants seeking to move into the organisation.
21. In the current battle for talent, organisations must ensure they remain competitive in the package they offer applicants. Officers consider the introduction of a relocation assistance policy as a key element to support this.

Legal Implications

22. The policy includes a strict process to ensure compliance with the relevant requirements to meet the criteria for tax and national insurance exemptions.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

23. The total level of support offered under the Relocation Assistance Policy is capped at £7,500 per person with the specific limits for various qualifying costs detailed within the policy.
24. Costs associated with the Relocation Assistance Policy will be contained within existing recruitment and retention budgets as part of the total cost planning process completed by the relevant department undertaking the recruitment exercise.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

25. There are no direct risk management of health and safety implications.

Environmental Implications

26. The utilisation of a relocation package that allows prospective candidates to move close to their employment base will reduce commuting distances and associated fuel use, contributing to net zero aims.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

27. This proposed policy will enhance and improve our recruitment offer and enable the Authority to continue to attract and employ the most suitable and qualified employees for key roles.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRA **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority**

EDI **Equality Diversity and Inclusion**