



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Fire & Rescue Service

Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

UPDATE ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 09 November 2018

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update to Members on activities undertaken since the previous review in May 2018.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Tracy Crump
Head of People and Organisational Development

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : tracy.crump@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries
Contact :** Therese Easom
(0115) 967 0880 therese.easom@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 21 April 2017, the People Strategy was presented and endorsed by the Human Resources Committee.
- 1.2 As part of monitoring arrangements, it was agreed that an update would be submitted to the Committee on a six-monthly basis to keep Members advised on progress. The last update was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 4th May 2018.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The People Strategy aligns closely with the Service's Organisational Development and Inclusion (ODI) Strategy and supports the Service transformation and improvement programme. The key areas identified in the ODI Strategy are service improvement, employee engagement, harnessing technology, strong and visible leadership and inclusion and equality. Progress against these objectives is reported through the Policy and Strategy Committee.
- 2.2 The focus for the People Strategy is set below:



- 2.3 **Delivering Our Services:** ensuring that the organisation has the optimum number of personnel to deliver effective and quality services to communities: this encompasses workforce planning and the way in which resources are managed to maximise efficiency and impact. Many of the aims inherent within this part of the strategy relate to work being undertaken by the Shaping Our Future Team, and are being implemented by Service Delivery. The main impact of any agreed outcomes for human resources, to the way that services are delivered, will be at the point of implementation, with anticipated changes to individual roles and training implications.

- 2.4 The fire-fighter selection process completed in July, with the appointment of 44 new entrants to the Service. Of these, four appointments were transferees from other Fire and Rescue Services who commenced their conversion training on 17 September 2018 and are now posted to station as fully competent fire-fighters. Three fire-fighters from the Service's on-call sections were also successful in the process and have been posted to stations to continue their development.
- 2.5 Thirty-seven new fire-fighter trainees have been offered places on the Initial fire-fighter training programme over the coming year. The first cohort of 14 trainees commenced their training at the Service Development Centre (SDC) on 10 September and will complete their initial course in December, at which time they will be posted to their substantive roles. The next trainee course will commence on 2 January 2019, with completion in March, and the final course will commence in Autumn 2019.
- 2.6 This new intake of fire-fighters will fill existing and projected vacancies to 2021, which will mean initial front-loading of posts and over-establishment of operational roles for a short period. This will ensure that the Service will be able to substantiate to fire-fighter vacancies as they arise in accordance with the Workforce Plan.
- 2.7 The positive action measures undertaken to increase the number of female candidates and those from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, have proven to be effective in attracting and appointing a diverse group of trainees. Further information regarding the approach is detailed in a separate report.
- 2.8 The Service has now commenced recruitment to middle management roles (Station and Group Manager) and strategic Area Manager roles to appoint to vacancies at this level, and to identify those with potential for future development. These processes are due to be completed by the end of November, and have been opened to both internal and external applicants.
- 2.9 The next phase of progression for supervisory manager roles (Crew and Watch Manager) is scheduled to commence in March 2019. At the end of this final phase of selection, a full complement of appointments to operational roles will have been completed to ensure maintenance of the operational establishment to the financial year 2020/21.
- 2.10 The number of personnel in their development phase and working toward competence during this period will be significant and will require dedicated support from both the Learning and Development department and workplace managers and this will be the focus of attention over the next year.
- 2.11 **Shaping Our Workforce:** the Sustainability Strategy, agreed by the Authority in 2016, is the focus for planned changes and includes re-negotiation of the rostering collective agreement, alternate delivery models to enhance retained firefighting cover, flexible retained fire-fighter contracts, alternative crewing arrangements for RDS sections, and mixed crewing at designated stations.

- 2.12 In February 2018, the Fire Authority agreed proposals to implement mixed crewing at Ashfield and Retford fire stations, and to roll out alternative crewing to retained sections.
- 2.13 Work on implementing mixed crewing is currently being undertaken by a cross-departmental project team, working toward an implementation date of April 2019.
- 2.14 The implementation of the Alternative crewing model for on-call crews is now live and several incidents have been successfully attended. Monitoring and evaluation has been put in place during the initial phase of implementation, and monitoring officers will attend incidents where an alternative crewing appliance is mobilised to provide additional support during this period.
- 2.15 The recent decision to undertake a detailed proposal to develop a joint control room with Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service has significant human resource implications for control room staff, and the HR team have been involved in providing guidance to inform the review. HR will continue to support this work, which will include consultation with employees and trade unions about the implications of the proposals as they are developed.
- 2.16 **Outstanding Leadership:** as previously reported, an NFRS Leadership Strategy has been published to set out the development pathway for existing and future leaders of the Service. The strategy provides a framework of competencies, professional / vocational qualification and behaviours that are required and developed at different stages of a career; from those aspiring to their first supervisory role to a strategic manager. The leadership programmes will provide the core learning needed to ensure technical and managerial competence.
- 2.17 An assessment of leadership qualification is currently being reviewed at a national level and NFRS are represented on this group. The advent of apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 – graduate and post-graduate qualification – has opened up new avenues which combine academic and vocational learning and which may be appropriate at middle manager and strategic roles. The Service is also reviewing the Middle Manager development programme to establish a route toward leadership competence for new and existing Station and Group Managers and equivalent support roles, with an implementation date from 2019.
- 2.18 The Aspiring Leaders programme, which commenced in December 2017, and is aimed at employees considering their first leadership role is due to complete and enrolment on a second programme will commence later in the year. Whilst participation is voluntary, this is a way of identifying and developing future leaders and providing participants with the tools to become effective managers. This includes access to the Open University Managers Toolkit, which is an on-line, distance learning programme that is particularly suitable for self-development and which opens up access to those who are unable to commit to an academic course, such as on-call or part-time employees.
- 2.19 **Workforce Development:** the training of both whole-time and on-call trainees will be the focus for the trainer team based at the SDC for the next year. This

is a significant challenge, in addition to the operational training already planned for 19/20 and the commitment and professionalism of all those involved in planning and implementing this training programme is recognised by the Service.

- 2.20 The e-learning team has continued to develop new packages for the NFRSLearn site; most recently, a training programme for Whole-time trainees has been developed which complements the initial training course by releasing material on a weekly basis to facilitate self-study and assessment. Each trainee has been provided with a laptop which links directly to the development site.
- 2.21 SDC programme scheduled work for 2019-20 includes specific high-risk sites, National Occupational Standards, animal rescue, HAZMAT, support for on-call learning and incident command. The site is widely used and helps to ensure acquisition and maintenance of up-to-date operational knowledge, and supports the introduction of new equipment and techniques.
- 2.22 Training in Compartmental Fire Behaviour Training (CFBT) has recently commenced at Derbyshire FRSs training centre and courses are plotted throughout 2018 and 2019. The training is provided by NFRS trainers and hosted at the Ripley venue, as well as at the RAF Waddingham (Lincolnshire FRS) site depending on geographical location of the trainees and this is a further example of collaborative working between services.
- 2.23 West Midlands FRS have also recently been commissioned to provide high rise training, which has dedicated high-rise training facilities, and will be undertaken as eight one-day courses between December 2018 and March 2019.
- 2.24 Agreement has recently been reached with Nottinghamshire Police to provide driver training for D1 Police drivers (multi personnel vehicles) over the next 12 months from the driving school site at Highfields. The Service is currently assessing potential for a reciprocal arrangement for the police to provide blue light training for officers.
- 2.25 Courses in coaching and mentoring skills and “Holding Difficult Conversations” are also scheduled as personal development events over the next couple of months.
- 2.26 **Workforce Engagement:** the focus for internal communications has been to share information with NFRS staff about the proposals to develop a shared control room with Derbyshire FRS and the proposed collaboration with the police on a shared estate, including a shared Headquarters. Whilst these proposals are at a formative stage, it is important that the Service engages openly with the workforce as part of its change management process. As the proposals progress, consultation will take place with those potentially affected and with the representative bodies to ensure that information is shared and that workforce concerns can be addressed.
- 2.27 Since the commencement of the whole-time trainee course, the Communications team have been providing video on You-Tube which tracks the progression of the trainees through short film clips and interviews. This

use of social media provides a means of informing the workforce and wider community about the challenges faced by the new trainees and show-cases the skills and fitness required to undertake a fire-fighter role.

- 2.28 A summary report from the employee survey which was launched in early March has been received and staff focus groups are being held to provide more in-depth feedback in specific areas highlighted by the responses. An action plan will then be developed and circulated with aim of addressing issues raised. Overall the response has been positive, with 55% of the workforce completing the survey.
- 2.29 **Positive Workplace and Culture:** work to promote the Service's core values 'Value and Respect', 'Open to Change', 'Professional' and 'One Team' has been recognised by 90% of those responding to the recent employee survey. This is an endorsement of the work undertaken by the organisational development and corporate communications team to embed the values across the service, although it is recognised that more work needs to be done to truly impact upon the culture of the organisation.
- 2.30 Morale has been identified as an issue by some respondents in the employee survey which, given the impact of measures taken to effect budget reductions and other changes to service delivery, is not an unexpected response. The measures implemented through the Sustainability Strategy will now provide a period of consolidation and service improvement which will go some way to addressing workforce concerns. The importance of employee engagement will play a key part in promoting a positive working environment.
- 2.31 **A Safe and Healthy Workplace:** the Health and Safety Statement of Intent has recently been revised and agreed by the Authority. This reiterates the Authorities commitment and overarching approach to health and safety risk management. A collaborative approach to the completion of operational task based risk assessments has been adopted to support the implementation of National Operational Guidance (NOG) and ensure consistent safety standards across the regional. Service Health, Safety and Welfare Committee (SHSWC) continues to scrutinise both proactive and reactive monitoring information, including that provided by National Operational Learning (NOL) to ensure continued learning from events.
- 2.32 The OH team are offering appointments for flu vaccinations for the workforce throughout October and November to reduce the likelihood of respiratory infection over the winter. This part of a strategy of pro-active support to encourage healthier lifestyles and prevent sickness absence.
- 2.33 A review of the current Management of Sickness Absence policy is currently being undertaken to ensure that policy and practice support for employees and interventions in place to promote a return to work at the earliest opportunity. A Well-being strategy, which draws together the occupational health support available to employees, will also be developed to ensure that employees are aware of the range of support available to them to maintain their physical, mental and emotional health throughout their working life. This is particularly pertinent as pension changes mean that employees will have longer working lives and may face health challenges at different stages of their career.

- 2.34 **Inclusion:** the Service recently signed a tri-service commitment, with Derbyshire and Leicestershire FRS', to actively support and address issues for the deaf community. The BSL Charter commits the services to work with the Deaf Community to ensure improvements in access to services and communication with the deaf community. A recent review has been undertaken to identify issues faced within Nottinghamshire, and an action plan is being formulated at a local level.
- 2.35 An action plan to address issues raised through a questionnaire to female employees has been now been agreed, and work is progressing in various areas, such as maternity, uniform, facilities and menopause, to take forward suggestions for improvement. This work is monitored through the Equalities Steering Group, which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.36 The positive action work which has been successful in encouraging applications from a diverse range of applicants to apply for fire-fighter roles with the Service has been developed into a case study, which will be circulated nationally as an example of best practice to other FRS. A more detailed report on this work is set out separately.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Human resources and learning and development implications are contained within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as the People Strategy does not directly affect policy or service delivery, however proposals arising from individual work-streams will be subject to an equality impact assessment at the development and implementation stages.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. However, some of the proposed workstreams may have contractual and employment law implications which will form part of the specific proposals. The Human Resources team will work closely as an integral part of project teams to ensure that all contractual and legal implications are highlighted and addressed.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The development and implementation of a People Strategy forms part of a suite of strategies which underpin the effective leadership and governance arrangements of the Service, establishing a clear direction and priorities for the workforce.
- 8.2 Evidence of effective workforce planning and commitment to equality and inclusion will form part of any future inspection undertaken by the HMICFRS.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As set out in the report, the Service is actively seeking collaboration opportunities with the Nottinghamshire Police and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Service in several areas of service activity, most notably learning and development activities. Current activity is set out within the report.
- 9.2 The proposal to develop detailed business cases for a Joint Control Room with Derbyshire FRS, and to move toward a shared estate with the Nottinghamshire Police, will require the respective Human Resources and Learning and Development teams to work closely together to achieve an integrated approach to workforce issues should the proposals be progressed.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER