

## report

meeting	<b>NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY</b>	
date	<b>1 AUGUST 2003</b>	agenda item number

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

#### POST OF TRAINEE ACCOUNTANT

#### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to the creation of a post of Trainee Accountant within the Finance Section of Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters.

#### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since the creation of the Fire Authority in April 1998 the Finance Section has been operating with a structure designed to prepare for these changes.
- 2.2 Whilst this structure has been largely effective, recently two senior members of staff have sought to reduce their working hours due to family commitments and this has been accommodated in line with our commitment to support family friendly working arrangements. It was always considered likely that an additional member of staff would be recruited to cover this reduction in hours. However it was also considered prudent to wait until the new financial system was implemented in order to reassess workloads before making any permanent decisions.
- 2.3 The new system is now implemented within the Finance Section at Headquarters and is to be rolled out across the Service shortly. In addition, plans are being made for the changes that emerge both from the implementation of Integrated Risk Management and the prospect of precepting from 2004. Whilst the implications for staffing in the longer term have yet to be fully assessed, it is clear that the staffing levels in the section need to be brought up to the level they were set in 1998.
- 2.4 Ordinarily this would be achieved by appointing a part-time member of staff within the existing establishment. However, as part of the review of duties and workloads it has become apparent that the Section would benefit from the appointment of an Accountancy Trainee.
- 2.5 There are a number of reasons for this suggested approach. An Accountancy trainee will undoubtedly be a graduate or of graduate quality which would be difficult to attract without offering a training package of this nature. Nevertheless an employee educated to this level will be able to provide considerable added value to the existing office environment. It is also true that the presence of a trainee in the department will, almost by default, serve to update skills generally as they require help and assistance with their studies and also introduce new ideas.

2.6 It is important, however, to both attract the right candidate and avoid the prospect of “post blocking” by a candidate who may be unsuccessful in their studies. With this in mind it is proposed to create a training agreement which will lead to the termination of continued employment if the post holder discontinues their studies or is unable to reach the necessary standard to pass the professional examinations. Such contracts are common in the professions and the County Council’s own scheme is to be used as a model. Job description and details of the training scheme are attached.

2.7 The proposed grading for the post is to be in accordance with the following scale:

On appointment	Scale 4
On passing P1	Scale 5
On passing P2	Scale 6
On passing P3	SO1

It is proposed that the candidate be allowed one resit as of right with an option to the Fire Authority to terminate the contract after two failures. The Fire Authority would similarly have the option to terminate the contract upon qualification.

2.8 In order to finance this post it is proposed to formalise the reduction in hours of two existing post holders which have been allowed to remain in the establishment pending a staffing proposal.

### 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 A reduction in the hours of two members of staff will realise the following savings:

PO45	£12,872
PO36	£8,404
Total	£21,276

3.2 The cost of a new post will be:

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Saving</u>
Year 1	£14,817	£6,459
Year 2	£16,944	£4,332
Year 3	£19,185	£2,091
Year 4	£21,282	-

The savings in the first three years will adequately cover the additional costs of training which are anticipate to be of the order of £2,500 per annum.

### 4 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The personnel implications are set out in the report in full.

**5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Full account will be taken of equal opportunities issue in making this appointment. The appointment will be open to any relevant graduates and indeed other individuals who meet the minimum educational requirements for student membership of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

**6 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no specific risk management implications arising from this report.

**7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 That Members approve the appointment of Trainee Accountant, Scale 4/SO1.

**8 BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION**

None

P. Woods  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

# NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>POST:</b>	Trainee Accountant
<b>GRADE:</b>	Scale 4/SO1 (Career Grade)
<b>CONDITIONS OF SERVICE:</b>	Administrative Professional and Technical
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	Senior Accountant Head of Finance and Resources (professional matters)

### **General Description of the Post**

1. The post holder will undertake a training programme leading to qualification with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
2. The post holder will gain a range of financial experience both through work within the Finance Section of the Service and also on placement to another organisation. Placement may also be arranged with other sections of the Service in order to broaden experience.
3. Whilst working towards full membership of CIPFA, the trainee will be expected to make a positive contribution to the work of the Finance Section and take specific responsibility for tasks delegated by the Section head.

### **General Duties**

4. The work will vary and will take into account the stage of training/experience attained. The post holder may be involved in any or all of the following, depending on the prevailing needs of the service:

#### **4.1 General Finance Work**

Assisting the Senior Accountant with general financial duties within the office environment. This could involve processing of invoices, assisting with the Sales Ledger and provision of advice and support to District Officers.

#### **4.2 Accounting**

Provision of accounting support to the manager and other staff in the section, including the preparation of accounting entries and assistance in the year end accounts process, assisting in the preparation of budgets and budget monitoring and the completion of grant claims and statistical returns.

#### **4.3 Audit (on placement)**

Carrying out audit assignments, including organising the work, maintaining adequate working papers, drafting audit reports and discussing audit findings and recommendations with departmental managers.

5. The post holder will attend such college based courses as are required to attain the CIPFA qualification and pursuant to this will take steps necessary to keep abreast of current developments within the public sector. The post holder will take a joint responsibility along with the Head of Finance and Resources for identifying development needs and agreeing strategies to meet these.
6. To support the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's equal opportunities policies and practices and help to deliver quality services that are sensitive and responsive to customers.

7. **General Responsibilities**

- 7.1 You must take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by your work activities.
- 7.2 You must co-operate with Nottinghamshire's Fire and Rescue Service's attempts to comply with health and safety legislation. Where appropriate you must safeguard the health and safety of all persons affected by the work activities you supervise at any premises you have control over.
- 7.3 You must work in the safe manner in which you have been trained and instructed and advise your line manager of any health and safety problems you become aware of.
- 7.4 You should familiarise yourself with the contents of the Service's Written Safety Policy.
- 7.5 To keep up to date with current practice, undertake training and Continuous Professional Development as required.
- 7.6 To take proper care in handling, operation and safeguarding of any equipment, vehicles or appliance, used or issued by the Service or provided or issued by a third party for individual or collective use in the performance of the post holder's duties.
- 7.7 To uphold the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's Fairness at Work and Equal Opportunities policies and practices.
- 7.8 To promote and deliver fair and quality services that are sensitive and responsive to customers.
- 7.9 Where appropriate you will work with computer and new technologies and associated systems as required.
- 7.10 Compliance with computer security measures to protect against unauthorised access to, alteration or disclosure.
- 7.11 Any other duties which may reasonably be regarded as within the nature of the duties, responsibilities and grade of the post as defined, subject to the proviso that normally any significant changes of a permanent nature should be incorporated into the job description in specific terms.

