



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY 2010-13

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 22 October 2010

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval for the Human Resources Strategy 2010-13.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Human Resources Strategy 2007-10 was agreed by the Combined Fire Authority at its meeting on 22 February 2008.
- 1.2 This Strategy set out the Service's strategic vision for people management, based on the national CFOA HR Strategy framework, to underpin the lifecycle of the Community Safety Plan.
- 1.3 The Strategy has been updated and realigned to ensure that it reflects the changing environment in which the Service now operates.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Service has made significant progress against the objectives set out in 2007. These centred on:
 - Developing leadership and capacity
 - Developing the organisation
 - Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce
 - Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service
 - Recognition and reward
 - Developing the capacity of HR
- 2.2 These objectives were very much influenced by national directives which set out expectations of how Fire and Rescue Services should aspire to work and improve and, in some cases, meet targets established as part of the modernisation agenda – these are set out in the National Framework(s), national Learning and Development Strategy and national Equalities Strategy. These documents did create an impetus for improvements across all Fire and Rescue Services and, in particular, have led to fundamental changes to the way that the Service operates and its approach to human resource issues.
- 2.3 However, the environment within the public sector has clearly changed since the last Strategy was written in 2007 and so have the key issues for Human Resources. The updated HR Strategy reflects this and is more focused upon the challenging environment that we now face within a context of budgetary constraint, service review and changes to legislation. The Service has more opportunity to set its own agenda in terms of its HR priorities.
- 2.4 The Strategy sets out local principles which will drive and be central to HR management within the Service. These are set out as Aims and Objectives and include the core values which underpin all Service activity.
- 2.5 The way in which the Service will deliver in key areas is set out under the section "Strategy in Practice". This outlines the key principles and priorities for functional areas within HR over the next three years.

- 2.6 These will be translated into annual business plans with measurable outcomes and timescales which will be evaluated through the Service's performance management processes.
- 2.7 An evaluation of the Strategy will be undertaken annually to assess progress made in each area and to report back to the Human Resources Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the Human Resources Strategy, however there will be costs associated with the implementation of detailed work-streams in due course. Such costs would be included within the normal budgetary setting process.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES / LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Strategy underpins the way in which HR issues will be prioritised and delivered over the next three years. Learning and Development implications are set out in the report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The importance of addressing equality and diversity issues are central to the Strategy and are a high level priority for the Service. The Strategy does not in itself adversely impact upon employees or service users with protected characteristics, indeed it seeks to encourage a culture in which all employees are treated fairly and equally and which is committed to the elimination of discrimination in employment and service delivery. As new policies and provisions are developed, each will be subject to an initial equality impact assessment to identify and consider equality impact.
- 5.2 The Service's Single Equality Scheme and Equalities Action Plan 2009-13 provides the Service with its strategic direction on the equalities agenda and is linked to this HR Strategy.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The adoption of an effective Human Resources Strategy is integral to the achievement of the Service Plan and underpins the strategic objectives of the Service and forms part of corporate risk management measures associated with the delivery of these objectives.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the revised Human Resource Strategy 2010-13 is approved by the Committee.

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

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Fire & Rescue Service

Creating Safer Communities

Human Resources Strategy

Policy No: Strat 1003

Scope:

This Strategy applies to all employees of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Summary:

This Strategy sets out HR priorities and principles for the Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, and covers the period 2010-13.

Version Control:

<i>Person Responsible</i>	<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>
HR Manager (corporate)	1.0	Sept 2010
Revisions		

Review Date:

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1. FOREWORD

- 1.1 The period since the adoption of the current HR Strategy has been a time of service development and improvement for the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The challenges posed by the national modernisation agenda, set out in the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework documents, required the Service to undertake a fundamental review of its priorities, the way these could be delivered and to appraise how effectively it was meeting its commitments to the local community. Underpinning this agenda has been a commitment to tackle equality and diversity issues, through service delivery, prevention and employment.
- 1.2 Notwithstanding these challenges, it is and always will be the primary role of the Service to respond to emergency situations and to ensure that fire-fighters have the skills, knowledge and resources to operate effectively and safely. The first priority of the Service is to ensure an effective infrastructure of management and support to frontline personnel and to maintain the confidence of the public in the services that we deliver. The Human Resources team have worked hard to establish a responsive and high quality support network to ensure that at a strategic, operational and management level we are supporting the organisation to achieve its objectives.
- 1.3 At the time of writing, the political landscape is changing. Funding is likely to become tighter and priorities will inevitably come under scrutiny. The ethos of working “smarter not harder” will become an imperative for future changes. Efficiencies and their resulting savings will need to be found.
- 1.4 Human Resources will continue to play a central role in supporting and guiding the organisation at a time when difficult decisions will have to be made and implemented. It will work at a strategic level to guide decisions that will impact on employees and work with managers to deal effectively with issues within the workplace. It will work to ensure that workforce planning is effective and allows the service to deliver its objectives. It will work to ensure effective engagement with employees and with our representative bodies. It will work to embed a culture of fairness and equality across the service and to provide an environment where the health, safety and well-being of its employees is paramount.
- 1.5 I believe that this Strategy sets the direction and provides a sound basis for the future development of Human Resources into the next decade.

Andrew Beale
Director of HR/Deputy Chief Fire Officer

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The HR Strategy 2007-10 very much reflected the national drivers for service improvements which were set out in documents such as the National Frameworks, National Learning and Development Strategy, National Equalities Strategy, core values and CFOA Human Resources Strategy. The themes which arose from these documents provided a framework for HR development across the national Fire and Rescue Service. The CFOA document in particular was the main focus for the NFRS HR Strategy and identified six key priorities:

- Developing leadership and capacity
- Developing the organisation
- Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce
- Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service
- Recognition and reward
- Developing the capacity of HR

2.2 By its nature a HR Strategy is always a work in progress. The objectives of the national HR Strategy are set out as Appendix One and are still relevant today. However significant progress has been made by the Service over the last three years in taking forward initiatives and service improvements in all of those areas set out above. Many of these are now incorporated into the way that we work and approach HR issues.

2.3 The next three years will require us to build upon this progress within the context of a changing political, legal and financial environment. It is clear that the fire service nationally will have less central direction in terms of targets and in the determination of its priorities and it has been made clear that individual authorities may set their own agenda in terms of regional collaboration and the way that they recruit and develop their workforce.

FUTURE DRIVERS

2.4 Looking ahead to issues which may affect future drivers for change within the life of this Strategy, significant issues will include:

- Implementation of the Service Plan 2010-13

- A fundamental review of the service delivery model in terms of the balance between response and prevention

- The outcome of the Fire Cover Review which may result in a fundamental change to resourcing requirements;

- An assessment of the current role and employment issues posed by the Retained Duty System – taking particular account of the impact of the Part Time Worker regulations, the Working Time Regulations and restrictions on driving activity;

- Budgetary constraints which may result in significant reductions across all service budgets and withdrawal of central funding streams resulting from the outcomes of the comprehensive spending review;

Legislative changes which will include further regulation of agency workers, the lifting of the statutory retirement age and the impact of the Equalities Act;

Changes to pension scheme regulations which are currently under consultation and may result in increased employer and employee contributions and review of existing benefits;

Changes to current regional working arrangements which may impact upon collaboration on Fire-fighter recruitment, Assessment and Development Centres and regional people work-streams;

Anticipated delays to the Regional Control Project;

Review of the National Fire and Rescue Service Equalities Framework.

Increasing pressure to maximize reducing budgets by identifying and addressing areas of loss (or potential loss) via the application of risk management techniques.

- 2.5 This strategy sets out the underlying principles and aims for human resources management over the next three years. The emphasis will be to deliver continuous improvements, specifically on those Diversity and Workforce issues established within our Service Plan 2010-13. It is underpinned by the Learning and Development Strategy and by our Service Values.
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3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 At a local level, this Strategy will aim to achieve the following key objectives:

Contribute to the management of corporate risk by
“Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, identifying and providing advice on individual and corporate risk to the organisation”

Support the delivery of the Safety Plan by
“Working with others in the organization to develop partnerships that support the delivery of the Plan, with the focus on Fire and Rescue Service staff and Workforce Development”

Ensure effective workforce planning by
“Linking the HR Business Plan to the corporate plan and working with others to support achievement of their business objectives, identifying and planning for change and ensuring that the organisation has the skills and resources to meet future needs”

Support all employees through effective Human Resource policies and practices by
“Creating a work environment where people feel safe, valued and respected and where they are treated fairly ”

Managing change effectively by
“Supporting employees on an individual basis, ensuring effective communication and information-sharing, engaging with staff and the representative bodies on changes to their work arrangements, and ensuring that employees have the skills to deal with change effectively”.

Developing people by
“Providing opportunities and support to enable people to achieve their full potential, and be role competent, and through implementation of the Service Learning and Development Strategy”

Support the organisation to develop and improve by
“Facilitating change through effective engagement with the workforce, challenging the existing culture where appropriate, and promoting continuous organisational development and best practice.”

Improve the health and well-being of all its employees by
“Taking a preventative and holistic approach and by reacting to the business needs of the organisation. A key aspect of the policy is to continue to reduce the instances and levels of sickness absence across the organisation”

Encourage and promote diversity, equality and fairness by
“Establishing values which encourage an inclusive working environment, free from discrimination and working toward a more diverse workforce which reflects the community we serve, and through implementation of our Equalities Action Plan”

Ensure the health and safety of all employees and those affected by Service activities by
“Implementing and maintaining safe systems of work by identifying and assessing work related hazards and applying the necessary risk controls”

Encourage the participation and engagement of employees, representative bodies and stakeholders by

“Consulting stakeholders at the earliest opportunity, ensuring positive engagement, open dialogue, and mutually acceptable outcomes”

Improve work-life balance and flexible working opportunities by

“Developing opportunities for people to balance their personal needs and commitments with the needs of the service”

“Live” our core values by

“Providing a responsive, efficient and high quality service to all our users every time; encouraging respect for other people and an appreciation of different cultures and differing needs of our local communities; supporting continuous service and personal improvement.”



4. STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

- 4.1 Through the implementation of this strategy we seek to achieve a Human Resource function which is central to and supportive of service delivery and improvements. The priorities and overarching principles for the next three years are summarized below:

Resources and planning

- 4.2 The workforce planning process is embedded within the annual business planning process. It will be our aim to provide management information which will allow the service to review its workforce requirements and plan for succession and recruitment into key roles. Control of establishment will be maintained by the Director of HR, working through the Corporate Management Team, to ensure that the structure of the service and numbers of salaried roles support the achievement of corporate objectives within budget.
- 4.3 It is important that the Service undertakes effective succession planning to ensure that it has sufficient competent supervisory and middle managers to meet projected vacancies which will arise through retirement at these levels during the life of this plan.
- 4.4 During the next 3 years, the Service will objectively assess its operational cover arrangements to ensure that resources are deployed to best effect and will be effective in meeting changing demands. The HR team will work with service managers to implement agreed changes.
- 4.5 The future shape and role of the Retained Duty System is likely to come under future scrutiny due to the impact of employment regulation on existing contractual arrangements. This may lead to changes to the nature of the employment contract and the way in which employees provide cover. The HR team will ensure that any contractual changes are subject to appropriate consultation and negotiation and the service meets its contractual and statutory responsibility in this regard.
- 4.6 The future shape of the workforce will undoubtedly be affected by budget constraints and will be the role of the HR function to facilitate changes to the current workforce through a range of options, including redeployment, job redesign, departmental re-structures, shared resourcing or, where this is unavoidable, through redundancy. Such changes will be undertaken through effective consultation with employees and their representatives with the aim of maintaining stability, effective communication and staff morale. This is likely to be the focus of HR activity over the next three years.

5. Employee Relations and Engagement

- 5.1 Building on our ongoing commitment, it is our aim to foster positive relations with our representative bodies and to engage directly with our employees on issues which affect them. In effecting any changes which may arise through the Fire Cover Review, budgetary impacts or through the development of the service, it is important that our employees feel informed and are able to contribute their views.
- 5.2 We will achieve this through formal and informal dialogue and by using the facility provided by the intranet, amongst other methods, to disseminate information and receive feedback. We are committed to undertaking an employee survey bi-

annually and to establish employee forums so that our employees are able to contribute to debate on a range of topics which affect them and impact on service delivery. The value of team meetings and regular briefings at all levels will be central to maintaining the flow of information and feedback vertically and horizontally across the organisation.

- 5.3 We will also develop a process through which employees will be able to contribute their ideas for improvements and efficiency savings and receive recognition for their contribution.
- 5.4 It will be our aim to minimize areas of potential workplace conflict through actively engaging with our representative bodies to achieve a shared understanding of issues and by seeking to find mutually acceptable resolution where this is possible. On an individual basis, the implementation of a workplace mediation process will be an alternative route to resolve workplace issues and to reduce the need for the use of formal grievance procedures.

6. Equality, diversity and culture

- 6.1 The importance of establishing fair and non-discriminatory employment practice and service delivery will remain a priority for the Service. We will continue to do this through improved equality and diversity training for all employees through traditional methods and through our on-line learning tool, LearnPro. The mainstreaming of equality will continue through the equality impact assessments we undertake on service functions and policies.
- 6.2 Building on work we have already started, we continue to develop a culture and working environment in which people treat each other with respect and where fairness, inclusion and mutual trust and support underpin our relationships at work and with our service users and wider community. We will seek to eliminate discrimination and bullying from our workplace and establish standards of expected behaviour. Our recent staff survey has told us that we are improving in this area and we intend to build on this success.
- 6.3 We will work to find more ways in which we can be more flexible in our working arrangements to accommodate family and caring responsibilities.
- 6.4 We will continue to nurture and establish effective links with our communities, and to work with other agencies to protect those who are most vulnerable and to understand and meet the different needs of the people we serve. We will ensure that employment opportunities are equally accessible to all, and will promote the fire service as a career choice. In particular, we will encourage more women and black and minority ethnic applicants to apply for jobs with the Service; and challenge negative perceptions.

7. Training and personal development

- 7.1 Our priority is to ensure that our workforce has the knowledge, skills and understanding to undertake their job roles safely and competently. This will be achieved through a variety of methods, as set out in our Training and Development Strategy.
- 7.2 The Integrated Personal Development System framework, linked to national occupational standards, will provide the benchmark for operational competence through a mix of technical training and workplace assessment. The maintenance of

competence will be assessed on an annual basis to ensure that knowledge and skills are refreshed and up-to-date for all roles, from Fire-fighter to Brigade Manager.

- 7.3 The Personal Development Review (PDR) process is the means by which our employees can discuss their personal development needs and access training and support for their continuous professional development. These needs will be met through access to our internal programmes, seminars and, where appropriate, professional courses.
- 7.4 Over the next 3 years, we will develop skills matrices for all roles within the service to establish core competencies and ensure that support staff have the opportunity to access training relevant to their role and to meet their future development needs.
- 7.5 The development of leadership skills will be critical as a number of long-serving managers are likely to retire from the service during the course of the next 3 years. The use of Assessment and Development Centres to identify those with the potential to progress to higher roles will continue to be supported at a regional level. Work is currently on-going to improve current access arrangements and make them more relevant to the situations that managers will face. The ADC process is the conduit through which individuals can access selection processes and will link to personal development plans to ensure that newly promoted managers, and those who require further development to meet selection criteria, are supported and receive the experience they need through temporary promotion opportunities.
- 7.6 The Supervisory and Middle Management Development Programmes, with links to the ILM qualification, forms the foundation for all management and leadership development, with additional support from the Centre of Excellence at Moreton and our links into the Nottingham Trent University Business School.

8. Performance Management

- 8.1 Our performance management system ensures that strategic objectives are cascaded through the organisation through the annual business planning process and the links made into team and individual objectives. At a corporate level, progress against objectives are monitored through specific steering groups and national and local performance indicators are scrutinised by the Performance Monitoring Committee. Individual performance objectives are set and monitored through the PDR process.
- 8.2 The Human Resources department will work with managers to actively manage individual performance issues and will ensure that HR policies and activity support the achievement of departmental objectives where inter-dependencies are identified.
- 8.3 The achievement of our objectives relies upon the effective management of attendance and the ability to work at optimum levels. The Service has worked hard to achieve absence levels below the national average and efforts will continue to be focused on supporting employees to return to work in some capacity where this is possible. Short-term absence will be monitored and issues addressed through effective managerial and occupational health interventions.
- 8.4 The planned replacement of the HR system will further improve efficiency and the integration of our information systems to ensure that managers have the information they need to manage workforce issues effectively.

9. Occupational Health and Fitness

- 9.1 Our occupational health and fitness team will work with individuals to ensure that the highest levels of support are available to employees who are recovering from illness or injury, and to promote a high standard of fitness. Our revised Fitness Policy sets out a standard of fitness to ensure that our operational personnel have the physical capacity to deal with operational demands and to minimise risk to personal health and safety.
- 9.2 The importance of stress awareness and management will continue to be a high priority for the Service and will become embedded in our managerial development programmes. The provision of counselling and workplace adjustments will continue to be available to support individuals as part of a managed occupational health response.
- 9.3 Access to physiotherapy, MRI scans and other options to promote recovery from injury will be available through our membership of the Westfield Health Scheme and form part of an individual rehabilitation plan monitored by the Service's Fitness Advisor and Occupational Health team.
- 9.4 The Occupational Health service will actively seek to improve health through prevention and awareness raising programmes with the intention of raising the levels of health and fitness throughout the organization.

10. Health and safety risk management

- 10.1 The highest priority for the Service will be to ensure the continuing health, safety and well being of its employees by adopting a pro-active risk management approach. The organisation will maintain its Written Safety Policy and Job Descriptions to clearly indicate its corporate aims and post-holder responsibilities.
- 10.2 Competent advice on health and safety risk management will remain readily available to the organisation and its line managers.
- 10.3 All events (events means accident, near-miss or dangerous occurrence) will be investigated and risk controls put in place to reduce avoidable work related injury and ill-health. Personal protective equipment will be of the highest standard and employees will receive clear instruction on the use of equipment and safe systems of work. The role of the representative bodies is paramount to this process and the key role of Safety Representatives is valued in ensuring and maintaining a safe work environment.
- 10.4 Risk assessment models and tools will enable line managers to effectively identify hazards, evaluate and then manage risk.

11. Employee pay and benefits

- 11.1 The Service is bound by contractual links to national pay systems and conditions of service.
- 11.2 At a local level we will ensure that our pay and grading processes are fairly applied and are based upon objective assessment of the role undertaken. We will achieve this through the application of job evaluation processes and progression procedures which do not discriminate on the grounds of gender or any factor other than the requirements of the job.

- 11.3 The Service is currently undertaking an equal pay audit to ensure that its pay and grading policies do not discriminate on the grounds of gender.
- 11.4 The Service offers access to a range of benefits and salary sacrifice schemes for its employees, including Westfield Health, childcare vouchers, cycle to work scheme, employee discounts and occupational maternity and adoption schemes which enhance statutory provisions.
- 11.5 We will seek to enhance our benefits package but will be mindful of the increasing constraints on our budgets and the need to show restraint at a time when public expenditure is under review.

12. Developing the capacity and value of the HR function

- 12.1 Through the work of the HR Business Partners, we continue to provide responsive and informed support to line managers and employees at their workplace and to establish good working relationships. The role of peripatetic trainers will further enhance this location based support. By working more closely with managers, and district based teams, it is our aim to develop a greater understanding of HR issues and to understand more about issues of importance to our workforce. We hope that this approach will go some way to closing the communication gap that has been identified through feedback from our service users.
- 12.2 The importance of HR skills and knowledge is a critical element in the development of effective managers. We will work with managers and with the L&D team to ensure that managers receive key HR skills training to support them in their roles.
- 12.3 A suite of HR policies and procedures will be available via the intranet and will be updated and supplemented to ensure consistency of approach and compliance with employment legislation and good practice. Such policies will be subject to consultation and negotiation with our representative bodies and will be equality impact assessed.
- 12.4 The development of a new HR system will provide managers and employees with greater access to information and will improve functionality and efficiency, with the aim of bringing together all HR data bases into an integrated system. The delivery of this project will, of course, be subject to budgetary priorities.
- 12.5 Joint working and the sharing of resources with our regional neighbours already operates across a number of HR areas such as regional fire-fighter recruitment, Assessment and Development Centres and the Regional Control project. We have also recently been working on a regional recruitment portal which will streamline the recruitment process and will become operational in 2011. It is anticipated that collaboration on HR related projects will continue as this shared approach will bring efficiencies and greater integration of approach.

13. Service Values

- 13.1 It is important to re-iterate that this Strategy is underpinned by those values and principles which have been adopted by the Service and which centre on:

Service to the community through working with others, recognising and responding to different needs, treating others with respect, being answerable to those we serve and striving for excellence in all we do

People by practicing and promoting fairness and respect for others, recognition of merit, acting with honesty, integrity and mutual trust, cooperative and inclusive working and supporting personal development
Diversity by treating everyone fairly and with respect, providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations, promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression with the service
Improvement by accepting responsibility for our performance, being open-minded, considering criticism thoughtfully, learning from our experience and consulting others.

REVIEW

This Strategy will be reviewed as part of the Service's annual planning cycle to ensure that key changes to national or local priorities or to our operating environment, are identified and incorporated into our priorities. The objectives of this Strategy will be built into our future Business Plans, and other performance management documents such as the Equalities Action Plan.

An evaluation of the Strategy will be undertaken annually to assess our progress and to report into the Human Resources Committee and Equalities Steering Group of the Combined Fire Authority on progress made.

Appendix 1

The Objectives of the national HR Strategy are to:

- Support the FRS in meeting current and future organisational needs
- Support the FRS in achieving an effective balance between intervention, prevention, safety, civil protection and resilience
- Support the FRS in achieving a culture of continuous improvement in organisational, team and individual performance
- Support the FRS in achieving a diverse workforce that is representative of the communities it serves across all occupational groups and at all levels promoting equality, fairness and dignity in the treatment of all employees
- Support the FRS in achieving best value from its investment in people management; including the efficient and effective targeting, deployment and management of resources and expertise
- Support the FRS in creating and sustaining a competent, motivated and well-led workforce - recognising the particular context of leadership in the operational/critical incident management aspect of FRS activity
- Support the FRS in developing and implementing employment packages that meet the needs of a modernised service and flexible workforce
- Support the FRS in developing collaborative methods of working and effective partnerships
- Support the FRS in promoting the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer of choice
- Support the FRS in recognising the contribution of all employees across the Fire and Rescue Service.

