



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY 2010-13

Report of Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 26 October 2012

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update on the implementation of the Human Resource Strategy 2010-13.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 An updated Human Resource Strategy was considered and approved by the Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2010. Members requested that a short milestone report be submitted on an annual basis to highlight progress made and to highlight key HR issues for the forthcoming year.
- 1.2 This review supplements the review undertaken in 2011, as reported to this committee on 21 October 2011.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Section four of the Strategy set out how key objectives would be implemented in practice across HR functional areas. Progress in these areas are summarised below:
- 2.2 **Resources and Planning:** paragraph 4.2 of the Workforce Strategy (“the Strategy”) refers to the need to align the workforce with service needs through effective planning. As part of an annual review of workforce requirements, the Workforce Plan 2012-14 was approved by this committee at its meeting on 27th July 2012. This identified the projected changes to workforce arising from the impacts of the Fire Cover Review and the service re-structure, as well as projected turnover, and set out an action plan to manage HR related issues identified in the Plan.
- 2.3 During 2012 the Service implemented measures to reduce the staffing budget, which also ran parallel with implementing key aspects of the Fire Cover Review – referenced in paragraph 4.4 of the Strategy. The closure of the retained sections at Carlton, Highfields and Edwinstowe has reduced the retained workforce from 252 to 216 units of cover. The Whole-time establishment has also reduced from 560 posts to 541 during 2012. Some aspects of fire cover review remain to be implemented, such as the reduction of cover at West Bridgford, variable crewing arrangements at Worksop and relocation of Central fire station. Whilst these are operational matters they will have workforce implications. It is anticipated that these changes will be implemented by 2015. Subject to the outcomes of the spending review for 2013-14 and 2014-15, the Service is not planning any further operational workforce reductions.
- 2.4 Projected workforce short-falls arising from retirements for the period 2012-14 are being addressed through the transfer of competent Fire-fighter and Watch Managers during 2012, and the appointment of up to 36 Trainee Fire-fighters through the current Fire-fighter recruitment process. This process will be completed by January 2013, with the first Trainee course running in March 2013. This will result in the whole-time establishment and ridership levels operating at full capacity and reduce the need to implement short-term cover arrangements which are currently in place.

- 2.5 A review of the Retained Duty model, as referenced in paragraph 4.5 of the Strategy, is scheduled to be undertaken during 2013. It is anticipated that this may lead changes to some aspects of retained cover and changes to contractual provisions. Such changes will be subject to negotiation with representative bodies.
- 2.6 The re-structure of service departments came into effect from August 2012 as referenced in paragraph 4.6 of the Strategy. As part of the review of support (non-uniformed) roles, the Service accepted 7 applications for voluntary redundancy. These will be effected during 2012 and 2013. The review also saw the creation of 11 new posts which will be filled during 2012-13. These new posts were reported to Human Resources Committee at its meeting on 20th April 2012.
- 2.7 Finally, a review of the Control section is currently under consultation with the aim of moving to a self-rostering system. This will facilitate greater flexibility in meeting peak demand and will result in an increase in Firefighter (Control) roles, with a reduction in Station Manager posts. It is anticipated that a new shift system will come into effect during 2013 to support the implementation of the new tri-service mobilising system.
- 2.8 The Human Resources Department has been, and remain, fully engaged in this process and will work with service managers and representative bodies to effect the changes to workforce and to ensure the Service meets its statutory obligations in terms of consultation and employment legislation.
- 2.9 The Service has made significant progress in implementing the Resources and Planning aspects of the Strategy and savings of £0.3m have been made to the pay budget across all employee groups during 2012-13.
- 2.10 **Employee Relations and Engagement:** the Service continues to place a high priority on effective communication with its workforce and the representative bodies. This has been particularly important given the level of change implemented by the Service in the past year. This has been achieved through frequent consultation meetings with representative bodies on establishment and structural changes, regular updates to all employees through the intranet news page, staff briefing papers and individual and team meetings. It has been a demanding period for all those concerned, and the positive engagement of the representative bodies in this process is acknowledged.
- 2.11 As part of its commitment to engage and listen to the views of its employees, as referenced in paragraph 5.2 of the Strategy, the Service circulated an employee survey during September, the results of which will be analysed and published before the end of 2012. The survey seeks to establish employee views over a range of issues and, where required, to develop an action plan for improvement in specific areas.
- 2.12 The development of an internal mediation process, as referenced in paragraph 5.4 of the Strategy, is now fully implemented and a number of referrals have been made over the past year. The aim of mediation is to

resolve workplace conflicts at an early stage, reducing the need for formal grievance and thereby improve working relationships.

- 2.13 The development of a scheme for considering employee suggestions for service improvements and efficiency savings, as referenced in paragraph 5.3 of the Strategy, has yet to be completed. This proposal will be developed during 2013-14.
- 2.14 In the previous review, it was anticipated that there may be a threat of industrial action arising from furtherance of a national dispute over pensions. In the event this was restricted to a day of action on 30th November 2011 which was undertaken by UNISON members. Agreement has now been achieved on changes to public sector pension schemes which will be implemented incrementally.
- 2.15 **Equality, Diversity and Culture:** the Equalities team is currently working with managers to prepare for the assessment against the Excellent standard of the equality framework in December 2013. This will be a focus for the Service over the next 12 months.
- 2.16 In line with paragraph 6.1 of the Strategy, significant work has been undertaken over the past year to embed equalities training within the core training programme, with an emphasis on developing skills and awareness to deal effectively with vulnerable individuals and those with special needs. PDR's for 2012 have been very successful in the identification of equalities training needs with over a quarter of staff actively requesting equalities and communities training. This supports the work being undertaken in other areas of the Service, and with our partners, to identify and support those who are most at risk in our community.
- 2.17 The Service has recently submitted its annual application to the Stonewall Index of employers, which rates employer engagement and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual employees and service users. We are hopeful that the Service will maintain or improve on its current position of 119, which signified an increase of 122 places since 2010.
- 2.18 The Fire-fighter recruitment campaign has provided an opportunity to undertake positive action initiatives to encourage applications from women and those from black and ethnic minority communities to apply to the Service. This supports the objective set out in paragraph 6.4 of the Strategy. Working with the Nottingham City Council Recruitment Hub, the Service has distributed leaflets and displayed posters promoting a fire service career, and has held Firefighter for a Day and mentoring events to provide information to prospective applicants. These have been well attended, with 89 (34%) women and 77 BME participants in Firefighter for a Day events and 44 women (44%) and 32 (32%) attending mentoring sessions. Early analysis of applications show that 10% (90) of all applications received are from women (90) and 10% (90) are from BME applicants. The selection process will conclude in December and it is hoped that the work invested in positive action will lead to an increase in successful candidates from these groups.

- 2.19 **Training and Personal Development:** Following extensive consultation, the Service has changed the way in which it develops its potential Supervisory and Middle Managers, with the emphasis on developing key incident command and core skills prior to promotion. This will ensure that the development phase in a new role is reduced and managers can commence their role with critical skills, particularly in operational command situations, already in place. As part of this greater emphasis has been placed on transferring technical knowledge and understanding, and assessment of competence in role. This aligns with paragraph 7.1 of the Strategy. Further, the Service has continued to develop and strengthen the competency of supervisory operational managers through the Vector incident command management simulation tool.
- 2.20 The Performance and Development Review (PDR) process has been revised during 2012 and supports the development of all employees within their current role. All employees receive an annual PDR and this is used to determine the resources to support the internal Service training programme along with the best allocation funding of external training courses for a wide range of staff development and learning for the next financial year.
- 2.21 Having steadily embedded and developed the use of e-learning and blended learning for NFRS staff through the LearnPro learning management system, we will now look to procure the PDRPro IT management system which will track and report on the required competency levels of all uniformed operational staff. This improved centralised system will be a significant support to the new Tri Service Control system and associated attribute based mobilising system.
- 2.22 **Performance Management:** the Service met its absence target during 2011, with an average of 5.94 days lost to sickness per employee . This compares with a national average of 9.1 days in the public sector and 7.7 days in the UK workforce. The target has been reduced again this year from 6.5 to 6.25 days per employee. There was only 1 ill-health retirement during 2011-12 which is a measure of the success of the way the Service supports individuals to return to work after long-term illness/injury wherever possible.
- 2.23 Attendance is actively managed through the Management of Sickness Absence Procedure and closely monitored by the HR Department. The Occupational Health and Fitness team work with HR to deal with health and fitness issues, with the aim of returning employees to work at the earliest opportunity through effective intervention, rehabilitation support and modification to duties where appropriate. This supports the objectives set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Strategy.
- 2.24 Following significant consultation, a Performance and Capability Policy has been introduced which will support managers and employees to deal appropriately with performance issues in line with paragraph 8.2 of the Strategy.
- 2.25 Work on specifying and procuring a new HR system has been progressed during 2012, and it is anticipated that a new system will be procured by April

2013. The implementation and development of a new system will be a key priority for the HR team during 2013. This will significantly streamline and enhance current provision and will lead to greater efficiency and integrated working across the organisation.

- 2.26 **Occupational Health and Fitness:** the revised Fitness Policy completed its first year of implementation and has been successful in introducing a consistent level of aerobic fitness across the operational workforce. Results show that 98% of 930 operational personnel tested achieved a Grade 1 pass. This links into the objective set out in paragraph 9.1 of the Strategy.
- 2.27 Management of stress was highlighted under paragraph 9.2 of the Strategy. Anxiety and depression (not work related) continue to represent the highest incidence of long-term sickness absence in 2012. The Service provides counselling support, including CBT and referrals to RELATE, for employees if required and will support employees on their return through the application of workplace adjustments where this is recommended by medical advice. Stress risk assessments are undertaken for any work related aspects which may be contributing to a condition. All managers receive stress management training as part of their development programme. This will be further developed to include the management of individual stress to provide employees with the skills and knowledge to identify and deal with their own stress at an early stage.
- 2.28 The Occupational team have been working with external agencies, such as the NHS Community Nutrition Team, and the Healthy Workforce, Better Health team, to implement joint working on health issues and to promote healthier lifestyle choices in line with paragraph 9.4 of the Strategy. Positive collaborative working relationships with Derbyshire and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services have been established, and this will lead to the issue of joint advice on management of post-incident trauma during 2013 and reciprocal service audits to ensure the maintenance of quality occupational health care provision. This aligns with paragraph 9.4 of the Strategy.
- 2.29 **Health and Safety Risk Management:** Current and future refurbishments and new-builds of the NFRS estate are being taken as opportunity to “design-out” health and safety problems and optimise as-built risk controls such as fire detection and vehicle/pedestrian separation.
- 2.30 The team’s Intranet site has been reviewed and revised to ensure line managers can more readily locate and refer to guidance on health and safety risk management. This is part of an initiative to make the most administration electronic.
- 2.31 A project to complete the necessary risk assessments of operational equipment and personal protective equipment is now producing evidence-based, proportionate risk controls which will inform our training courses, Technical Information Documents and Standard Test procedures.
- 2.32 Training is now provided specifically for Crew and Watch Managers in the recognition of hazards and management of risk associated with drill and

exercise planning. This will ensure they have confidence to devise and run realistic training scenarios which will prepare those taking part for what might actually occur at operational incidents.

- 2.33 **Employee Pay and Benefits:** the application of pay restraint within the public sector over the past three years has led to under-spends in the revenue account which will assist in cushioning the impact of budgetary reductions. An award of 1% has recently been agreed for operational personnel, although support (non-uniformed) employees are in the third year of a pay freeze.
- 2.34 An equal pay audit was concluded during 2011 and reported no significant gender disparities. The next audit will be undertaken in 2013.
- 2.35 **Developing the Capacity and Value of the HR Function:** the role of HR Business Partners is working well and means that HR has close involvement in district management teams and at local levels. This reduces the risk of legal challenge and ensures consistency of approach across the Service. A survey of managers will be undertaken in the early part of 2013 to evaluate the value of the HR Business Partner approach and to improve current provision where this is required. This is in line with paragraph 12.1 of the Strategy.
- 2.36 The HR team has played a full part in effecting workforce changes during 2012, including the management of redundancies, and has played an active role in the consultation and implementation process. Despite the complexity of the issues involved, there have been no formal challenges through the appeal or employment tribunal process.
- 2.37 In line with paragraph 12.3 of the Strategy, a number of employment policies and procedures have been developed or reviewed during 2012 to reflect changes to legislation and working practices, and are available in the reference library of the internet. All new or revised policies are subject to a full consultation process with the representative bodies and are equality impact assessed.
- 2.38 The Service has made significant progress in taking forward the objectives of the HR Strategy, and will continue to place a high priority on the effective management of its workforce, HR processes and working practices to support achievement of its strategic objectives.
- 2.39 Whilst the HR Strategy was originally envisaged to run through to 2013, the development of a revised Strategy will be aligned to the next Integrated Risk Management Plan which is due for publication in 2013. This Strategy will therefore run through to 2014.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The implications are contained within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There is no requirement to undertake an impact assessment as this report does not directly impact upon policy, function or service.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from the report.

8. 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 the corporate risk management measures associated with the delivery of these objectives.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

10. 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.

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.

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.”
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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.
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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.

