



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

PEOPLE STRATEGY 2017-20

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 23 April 2021

Purpose of Report:

To review outcomes from the People Strategy 2017-20.

Recommendations:

That Members note the report and progress made against the objectives of the People Strategy 2017-20.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In April 2017, the Service implemented a People Strategy as part of its transformational agenda “Shaping our Future”, which formed part of the overarching Sustainability Strategy. This set out the areas for workforce focus and development for the period 2017-2020, which aligns to the NFCC People Strategy 2017-2022.
- 1.2 Progress against the strategy has been reported to committee during this period. Whilst this has not been possible in the last year, due to the impact of Covid-19 on meetings of the Human Resources Committee, work on progressing the strategy has continued in the areas of workforce planning, recruitment, training and employee development, inclusion and employee engagement.
- 1.3 This report reviews progress against the key areas of the strategy.

2. REPORT

OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The focus for the People Strategy 2017-20 is set below:



- 2.2 **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. This has been delivered through:
- Annual workforce plans which plan for leavers and starters based on projected retirements, turnover, new work and skill areas and training requirements to maintain service delivery and deliver corporate objectives;

- The recruitment of 39 operational firefighters through wholetime recruitment in 2018, with a further 28 appointments pending from the recent 2020 campaign. An additional 21 firefighters have migrated from on-call roles. Collectively, this has helped to sustain ridership levels and reduce overtime payments;
- The recruitment of 80 on-call firefighters to maintain operational cover;
- Annual appointment processes to supervisory, middle manager and strategic manager roles as part of succession planning;
- The recruitment of 54 employees to roles which provide the professional, technical and administrative support that maintains front line services and delivery of key corporate objectives. A number of new roles have been created within ICT as part of the Digital Strategy 2019-2022 to enhance effectiveness through technological development and digital solutions.

- 2.3 Significant changes to service delivery during the period include the implementation of a Safe and Well approach to prevention, a review of the way that protection activity is delivered to service users and businesses and station based support for prevention and protection activities within local communities. This has involved the upskilling of operational personnel to a Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety (Fire Auditors) which is accredited by Skills for Justice.
- 2.4 Collaboration with partners to enhance service delivery continues to be a key priority. There have been many instances of collaborating with partners to deliver a more effective service to communities during the review period. This includes the co-location and sharing of facilities with the police at West Bridgford, Highfields, Carlton, and with the police and EMAS at Hucknall and shared use of assets such as a drone (Nottinghamshire Police), Incident Support Unit (Nottinghamshire Police) and Environmental Protection Unit (Derbyshire FRS).
- 2.5 The Service has also worked with agencies to support vulnerable people through its prevention teams, for instance the funding of an Occupational Therapist role with the NHS, collaboration on cadets, rural intervention and road safety with the Nottinghamshire Police, a Joint Audit and Inspection Team with the City Council.
- 2.6 The recent support provided to partners through the COVID-19 crisis, such as EMAS and within local communities through food parcel and medication deliveries, befriending and signposting support and support for Local Resilience Forum activities such as the creation of temporary morgue facilities and vaccination hubs, has shown that the service delivery model is flexible and adaptable to change when circumstances require this.
- 2.7 **Shaping Our Workforce:** the Sustainability Strategy, agreed by the Authority in 2016, was the focus for planned changes to the substantive establishment with a focus on creating efficiencies and realignment of resources to effect

budget reductions. Changes can be achieved by, for instance, changing ways of working, via the restructuring of roles and teams, or considering other ways of delivering services.

2.8 During the review period there have been some significant changes to enable greater efficiencies, which have included:

- The creation of a Joint Control Room with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service from July 2019, which saw a reduction of fifteen roles across both establishments with resultant long-term salary savings;
- The establishment of mixed crewing at Ashfield and Retford fire stations, which has resulted in a full-time crewing during the day and on-call provision between 8am and 6pm. The impact of this has been to further release capacity to support the ridership and to meet the savings outlined in the Sustainability Strategy;
- The implementation of an Alternative Crewing model for on-call sections which provides for the initial attendance of a crew of three to specified incident types to enhance response times for local communities;
- The extension of on-call activities to enhance recruitment and retention, and the ongoing implementation of flexible contracts to enhance availability;
- The dis-establishment of the Princes Trust team, with resultant budget savings, and collaboration with the Nottinghamshire Police on cadet teams across the county to engage with young people and promote a safer communities message;
- An ongoing review of the Rostering Collective Agreement to release capacity within the ridership and reduce overtime costs;
- The review and restructure of functions, including ICT, Corporate, Procurement and Resources, Prevention and Protection and Risk and Assurance teams to better align processes and create improvements in service delivery;
- A focus on organisational development and allocation of resources to support organisational and cultural change.

2.9 In summary, the Service has implemented some significant changes to the way it works and delivers our services during the review period. This has resulted in efficiencies and improvements that have supported delivery of the strategic priorities and established a resilient structure to support future demands.

2.10 **Outstanding Leaders:** The need to enhance leadership skills and plan for the next cadre of future leaders through succession planning is critical to achieving and sustaining high quality services and establishing a positive workplace culture. The way that the Service supports leadership development

is set out within its Leadership Framework, which has recently been revised to clarify the opportunities and expectations of current and future leaders, with a clear development pathway for those aspiring to progress to a managerial role. The framework aligns to the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework.

2.11 Over the review period the Service has:

- Reviewed and enhanced its leadership development programmes at Levels 3 and 5, which encompass supervisory and middle manager development. These are mandatory for new managers and ensure that they have the requisite knowledge and skills to manage teams, resources and make effective decisions. These academic courses supplement other learning and development activity within the workplace.
- Developed Aspiring Leadership Programmes at supervisory and, more recently, at Middle Manager levels for those employees who are thinking about their future progression, and facilitates a development pathway through access to workshops, e-learning, self-development and coaching support.
- Implemented a coaching and mentoring network to encourage employees to seek coaching and to act as coaches and mentors to others. The aim being to embed a coaching approach as an intrinsic part of a management "toolkit" to support and develop individuals and teams. Reverse mentoring has recently been introduced to support coaching relationships between more senior managers and employees.
- The introduction of 360-degree feedback to managers to support self-development;
- Facilitated the use of temporary promotions to allow experiential learning within the workplace, ensuring that experience is gained "on the job" with support when needed.
- Encouraged continuous professional development for employees at all levels through opportunities to update professional and leadership knowledge and skills as part of a lifelong learning approach.

2.12 The Leadership Framework provides a clear route for progression to, and development within, leadership roles to ensure that managers have the skills and attributes to perform effectively, and that succession planning is secured for the future.

2.13 **Workforce Development:** A key focus is the acquisition, maintenance and re-validation of core skills to ensure a safe and effective operational response. This is supported by access to a variety of learning resources for all employees to make learning accessible and encourage personal and professional development.

2.14 Over the review period the service has:

- Led regionally on the introduction of National Operational Guidance as a basis for reviewing operational training. and established a clearer link between risk and operational assurance by creating a Risk, Assurance and Operational Training department – ensuring that national guidance is more effectively translated into training outcomes;
- Reviewed specialist and command skills, with regular assessment and development opportunities;
- Implemented a mandatory training matrix for all employees to clarify development requirements as a basis for a role-related development plan;
- Implemented apprenticeships across a range of roles. All newly recruited wholtime firefighters are registered apprentices on the Level 3 Operational Firefighter standard and follow a national standard of development and assessment over 26 months. The Service has become a Registered Training Provider, which means that it can directly draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy to support its apprenticeship programme;
- Implemented a revised Performance and Development Review scheme to facilitate annual one-to-one discussions about development and training requirements. The scheme also links to discussions about performance and welfare and provides an opportunity to provide and receive feedback on individual performance and future priorities. Individual performance objectives are now linked to strategic objectives demonstrating a 'golden thread'. 96% of PDRs were completed in 2020;
- Established accessible ICT training, with the appointment of an ICT Trainer and on-line training packages to develop the technical skills of the workforce;
- Developed a suite of new e-learning products which are accessible via the Service's learning platform – NFRSLearn – to all employees and supports continuous professional development and maintenance of competence;

2.15 The Service has a strong commitment to employee development, and the level of support available to all employees for development of operational, technical and professional skills has been enhanced during the review period.

2.16 **Workforce Engagement:** To implement different channels for communicating with and informing the workforce and seeking active engagement and encourage feedback to make better informed decisions and improve understanding.

2.17 Over the review period the Service has:

- Introduced annual staff conferences, led by the Chief Fire Officer, to highlight key priorities and issues for the Service, and receive feedback from participants. These are supplemented by quarterly Middle Manager Briefings and Watch Manager development days;
- Provided regular briefings to staff via written or on-line updates. The regular Chiefs Update via Zoom has been positively received during the COVID-19 period, when meetings have not been possible, and this will continue to be a regular feature of our engagement strategy;
- The development of the intranet site – MyNet – allows for real time sharing of information. Employees can also use the messaging services to contact people directly about an article or use the Yammer site to post and join conversations.
- Completed an employee survey in 2020 to establish employee views about the Service. 62% of the workforce responded, and responses improved in 80% of the areas measured and in many cases an improvement on responses to the previous survey undertaken in 2018. Overall staff engagement was measured at 3.86 out of 5.0;
- Maintained a positive relationship with representative bodies to inform and consult on subjects important to employees and address issues at any early stage.

2.18 The Service has enhanced its channels for engaging with its workforce during the review period, the opportunities provided by technology to interact with people more widely has helped to keep employees informed and provided a platform for feedback that will continue to be developed in the future. The recent staff survey results showed that 76% of respondents felt well informed about Service priorities which is a high number given the geographical disbursement and shift-based nature of much of the workforce.

2.19 **Positive Workplace and Culture:** This is about creating a workplace where people feel accepted, included and valued. One of the three core principles is “an engaged and motivate workforce” and many aspects of the progress in the areas previously reviewed are linked to this aim – engagement, development and leadership - which all contribute to providing a positive workplace. However, it also includes physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Over the review period the Service has:

- Implemented a new Behavioural Framework as part of the roll-out of our core values. By adhering to the behaviours set out, all employees should be treated and treat others with respect, and review their own conduct against these standards;

- Undertaken engagement with those who are under-represented within the workforce – in particular women, those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender (LGBT) employees and employees with disability – to establish specific issues which adversely impact on them and seek to address these;
- Developed a Well-Being Strategy to establish this as a priority for the Service – this related to physical, emotional or mental health, ensuring that the Service provides support when it is needed and works pro-actively to prevent ill-health and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Introduced an Employee Assistance Programme to provide access to a range of support for all employees. This supplements the healthcare scheme, peer support, and fitness provisions already in place;
- Rolled out mental health awareness training to all employees, with a focus on stress management and dealing effectively with mental health issues in self or others;
- Enhanced fitness support for operational personnel, and for those seeking to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

2.20 The responses from the recent employee survey show that 81% of respondents felt that the Service is an inclusive and welcoming place to work, and 77% would recommend NFRS as a great place to work. 82% felt that the Service was serious about dealing with and eliminating discrimination, bullying, harassment and abuse in the workplace. These are encouraging figures and indicate that the approach and awareness raising undertaken during the review period has had a positive impact.

2.21 **Inclusion:** This is about creating a workplace based on respect for individuals, valuing difference and where no one feels marginalised or excluded. It is also about understanding diverse communities and developing positive relationships with all service users, particularly with those who may have specific needs or may be more vulnerable to fire or other risk of injury.

2.22 In addition to the focus on developing a positive workplace, the Service has:

- Targeted campaigns to reduce risk of fire and other injury across diverse communities, particularly those who are more vulnerable, through prevention work and working in partnership with other agencies;
- Implemented actions from its commitment to the British Sign Language (BSL) Charter to improve access to services for the deaf community;
- Invested in additional resources to support the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda and foster better understanding and engagement with under-represented groups within the community and our workforce;
- Undertaken positive action to encourage those who are under-represented within the workforce to apply for roles with the Service, and engaged with

initiatives such as the Future Leaders programme to provide development opportunities;

- Engaged with employees from BAME heritage to better understand and address issues of concern and provide channels for engagement;
- Continued to support disability, dyslexia and mental health in the workplace;
- Worked with Stonewall to improve access to services and to support our LGTQ+ employees and service users;
- Implemented actions to highlight and address issues affecting women in the workplace, such as uniform, period dignity, menopause, and career development.

2.23 Progress has been made to understand and address issues and promote equality and diversity, both as a strategic priority and to raise awareness and engagement across the workforce. Issues such as the Black Lives Matter campaign have highlighted the challenges that still exist to embed inclusion and address issues of potential inequality.

2.24 The People Strategy 2020-22 will seek to build upon the progress made, and which has been set out within this review.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources implications are set out within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this review does not represent a change to service delivery or policy. However, aspects of the strategy are intended to have a positive impact upon inclusion and equality issues, and these are set out within the report.

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. However, a range of the activities above demonstrate continued fulfilment of the Public-Sector Equality Duty.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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 workforce development.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The collaboration implications are set out within the main body of the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the report and progress made against the objectives of the People Strategy 2017-20.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER