



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

REVIEW OF PEOPLE STRATEGY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 05 November 2021

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the People Strategy for 2020-22.

Recommendations:

That Members note the progress made against the People Strategy objectives.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The People Strategy was refreshed in April 2020 to align with the Strategic Plan 2019-22. Due to the temporary suspension of committee meetings during 2020, this was reported to Human Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2021.
- 1.2 A subsequent report was considered by this Committee in April 2021. This review looked back at the work undertaken from 2017 to 2020 and covered the period of the previous People Strategy. This review also included progress up to April 2021.
- 1.3 The review period for this update is April to September 2021.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The People Strategy is key to the delivery of our Strategic Plan 2019-22, setting out how the Service will address and prioritise workforce issues to meet the aims and objectives of the Strategic Plan. This will be a period of both consolidation and transformation - embedding and enhancing the things the Service do well, improving and innovating where we can and rising to the challenges we will face at a local and national level.
- 2.2 The focus for the People Strategy 2020-22 is set below:

Delivering our Services: ensuring that the organisation has the optimum number of personnel to deliver effective and quality services to communities.

Shaping our Workforce: considering ways in which the Service can adapt its ways of working to create efficiencies and improve services.

Inclusion: creating a workplace based on respect for individuals, acceptance of differences and where no one feels marginalised or excluded. understanding our diverse communities and developing positive relationships with all our service users, particularly with those who may have specific needs or may be more vulnerable to fire or other risk of injury.

Outstanding Leadership: enhancing leadership skills and planning for future leaders through succession planning, critical to achieving and sustaining high quality services and establishing a positive workplace culture.

Workforce Development: ensuring that the Service has the operational skills and competence to ensure a safe and effective operational response and that learning resources are available to all employees to make learning accessible and to encourage personal and professional development.

Workforce Engagement: having effective communication with the workforce, to inform and seek active engagement to improve understanding about issues and priorities and providing effective channels for feedback.

Positive Workplace and Culture: creating a workplace where people feel accepted, included, and valued.

Employee Well-Being: retaining and promoting a healthy, productive, and engaged workforce with support for physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. The Well-Being Strategy sets out the Service's commitment to helping employees to establish healthy lifestyles, remain fit for role and supporting them during periods of ill-health and on their return to work.

UPDATE

2.3 The following update provides a summary of key activities in the last six months.

2.4 Delivering our Services: the Service has recruited forty-five new starters during the review period. This includes twenty-seven appointments to Whole-time Firefighter roles, eight to On-Call roles and ten to support roles. This links to our workforce planning and ensures that the Service has the numbers, skills, and employees in development to deliver on the objectives of its Strategic Plan.

- Twenty-five Fire-fighter apprentices commenced their initial training in April and September 2021, and two competent Fire-fighters transferred from other services. The first cohort of Apprentice Firefighters have been posted to station and are now in their development phase. The September course will be completed in December.
- An On-Call initial acquisition course commenced in July. The format of the course has been changed recently to a modular approach, which means that trainees can complete their training in eleven weeks or take up to 12 months to complete their critical modules. This provides more flexibility for trainees who have to balance their primary employment commitments with operational training. It also allows more time on station between modules on completion of the Safe to Ride element of the training programme. This aligns with the aim of making On-call employment more accessible and attractive to potential candidates.
- Promotion processes have taken place recently for Station Manager roles and two appointments were made. A Crew Manager promotion process is now open and will complete in December, and a Watch Manager process will complete in February 2022. This is part of our succession planning to take account of the number of supervisory and middle managers who are projected to retire over the next two years.
- The Workforce Plan has been refreshed and was presented to members at the meeting on 2 July. This ensures that recruitment is planned, and key workforce issues progressed. Due to the number of projected retirements, a decision has been made to run a wholetime recruitment campaign each year until 2025. This also allows the opportunity to enhance the diversity of the workforce through positive action.

2.5 Shaping our Workforce: a number of areas have been progressed to enhance current working arrangements and are aligned with the aim of developing working models to create more agile and flexible ways of working:

- Negotiations with representative bodies have led to changes to the current Rostering Collective Agreement for wholetime employees, which will be applied from April 2022. The aim of the changes is to improve efficiency and flexibility and more effectively utilise the annualised hours arrangements in place.
- A project to review On-call Pay and Contracts is in progress with the aim of reviewing the way that hours of availability are managed, which currently require a minimum of 84-hours of available cover, and to provide more flexibility to current and future On Call employees. This aligns with the aim of making On Call employment more accessible and attractive to potential candidates and to enhance retention of existing On-call employees.
- A draft agile working policy has been developed and is currently in consultation. This applies to office-based staff whose role is open to working from different work locations, including from home. A more detailed report is contained within the meeting agenda.
- Work has commenced to develop a competency framework for support roles to ensure that the Service has the right skills and competencies in place to deliver its objectives, and to target development.

2.6 Inclusion: a Community Engagement Plan and Equality and Inclusion Plan have been completed which set out the Service objectives for the next two years. These plans have been endorsed by the Strategic Inclusion Board and Equality Steering Group and work is underway to deliver against their objectives. Other progress to note:

- The Service has recently commissioned an external consultant to undertake an EDI review. This will involve a review of policy and practice and will include focus groups from across different stakeholders to explore how effectively inclusion is embedded and to recommend improvements. This is due to be completed by the end of the year.
- An equal pay review and Gender Pay audit have also been undertaken and are reported within the Equalities Monitoring report which is contained within the agenda.
- A new BAME Community Advisory Group (BCAG) has become established to help support our engagement with Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The group will act in an advisory and sounding board capacity with the aim of developing stronger relations between BAME communities and the Service, identifying opportunities for better

community engagement, sharing information with communities, and advising on areas for development.

- A Women's Network and LGBT+ Network have officially launched in recent weeks. These are employee led forums, supported by an SLT champion, and are a welcome addition to the existing BAME network.
- The Service were proud to contribute to the Pride event on 11th September, which was led by an appliance and crew from Arnold fire station.

2.7 Employee Engagement: the Service continues to engage with those staff who will be relocating to the Joint Headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police (NP) from January 2022. Two joint employee update events have been held with NP in April and July which were very well attended and brought staff up to date on progress and to raise any issues about the move. A dedicated JHQ page has also been established on MyNet to provide readily accessible information for staff and to respond to queries. A joint employee forum is also well established and meets monthly to provide feedback and contribute ideas.

2.8 Positive Workplace: promotion of our Service values has been highlighted with the refreshing of posters around all our sites and an introduction to the new NFCC Code of Ethics and how this integrates into our existing behaviours framework. Plans for the next Awards evening on 24 November are well underway and employees have been encouraged to nominate colleagues, partners and members of the public who deserve recognition.

2.9 Well Being: the focus on supporting good mental health continues, with the appointment of a part-time mental health practitioner to support development of our approach to mental health issues for an 18-month period. The Occupational Health team have been working on a mental health application, called Back-Up Buddy, which will be available to all employees and will provide information, guidance, and contacts for people to access on their own mobile phone or personal computer. Both these initiatives have been supported through transformational funding.

- Work has also been progressed on a strength and conditioning programme for operational employees to enhance core fitness levels and to avoid Musculo-skeletal injury. There is a significant amount of information about the programme on the Well-Being Mynet site, which employees can readily access and use, and a formal trial is due to be rolled out using volunteers to gauge the effectiveness of the programme. The Service Fitness Advisor is working with the NFCC Firefit group to share the programme and our Healthy Lifestyles programme nationally.

2.10 Whilst this review provides a snapshot of key activities over the last six months, there are many more areas of work that are in train and have been reported previously to this Committee. The review provides assurance that the objectives set out within the People Strategy are being progressed

effectively. With the development of the new Community Risk Management Plan, the People Strategy will be refreshed in 2022.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to support the delivery of the People Strategy objectives has been built into the 2021-22 budgets.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The workstreams which support the delivery of the People Strategy have been built into the strategic and business planning process for 2021-22.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the 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 have been set out within the report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The development and implementation of a People Strategy forms part of a suite of strategies which underpin the effective leadership and governance arrangements of the Service, establishing a clear direction and priorities for workforce development.
- 8.2 Evidence of effective workforce planning leadership and commitment to equality and inclusion, form part of HMICRS inspections across the areas of: promoting the values and positive culture; workforce planning; well-being; workforce skills and capabilities; employee engagement; managing performance and developing leaders.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are direct collaboration implications associated with preparation for the co-location to a Joint Headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police in 2022. Opportunities to establish collaborative and partnership working in delivery of the strategy will be pursued where this would lead to efficiencies or improved ways of working and delivering services.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the progress made against the People Strategy objectives.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER