



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Joint  
Police Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 21 April  
2023 from 10.05am -11.03am**

### **Membership**

#### **Present**

Councillor Dave Trimble (Chair)  
Councillor Robert Corden  
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan  
Councillor Nigel Turner

#### **Absent**

Councillor Tom Hollis

### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager  
Nick Linthwaite - Human Resources Manager  
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

## **19 Apologies for Absence**

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

## **20 Declarations of Interests**

None.

## **21 Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## **22 Human Resources Update**

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report, which was presented by Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, and Nick Linthwaite, Human Resources Manager, and provides an update on key human resources metrics and equalities monitoring data.

General statistics consider activity between the 01 January to 31 March 2023 reporting period, with absence figures spanning the period of 01 January to 31 March 2023, and equality statistics spanning the period 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) During the reporting period 25 individuals joined the Service, and 17 left, resulting in the establishment holding 23 whole-time vacancies;
- b) With regard to the whole-year overview, spanning the 2022/23 financial year, two trainee courses were run to fill the whole-time establishment posts, which resulted in the recruitment of 24 whole time staff, who are scheduled to start in April and September;
- c) A service transfer recruitment period resulted in two successful candidates joining from other Fire and Rescue Services;
- d) The number of leavers was within the predicted numbers, with the rate slowing;
- e) A revised workforce plan will be presented to the next meeting;
- f) During the period of 1 October to 31 December, 102 sickness absence days were recorded for whole time staff, which is 17.3% lower than last year;
- g) As previously requested by members, appendix A to the report provides a breakdown of absence trends by year quarter, for the past three years;
- h) Appendix B to report provides a national fire service picture of sickness absence for whole time firefighters, retained firefighters, and green book staff, alongside all other Fire and Rescue Service reported absence;
- i) The Service continues to monitor trends, and where possible, take action to prevent further absence, including working with employees on long-term sickness absence;
- j) With regard to equalities, for the period 1st October to 31<sup>st</sup> March, there was very little change in the diversity of the operational workforce. The Support function is considered generally more representative of the county's population, however, there is still work to do;
- k) As previously requested by members of the Committee, the report sets out the percentage of protected characteristics within the whole workforce operational roles on-call roles and support roles, by percentage of the workforce;
- l) Work continues to further improve the diversity of the workforce and has included a rebranding of recruitment campaigns for all roles, and broadening recruitment engagement at jobs fairs public events and schools;
- m) Further information on the actual roles within the breakdown of the support work force by protective characteristic and grade was not available at the meeting, but could be supplied at a later date.

**Resolved to note the report.**

**23 People Strategy Update**

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, provided an update on the priorities for the People Strategy 2022-25, which is in line with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and underpinned by the national standards and work of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) In addition to ensuring that the needs of the Service are met, the 4 key areas of the people strategy are:
  - i. shaping our workforce;
  - ii. positive workplace and culture;
  - iii. inclusion;
  - iv. health and well-being;
  
- b) with regard to Shaping our workforce,
  - i. During the 2022-23 the Service has undertaken a whole-time recruitment campaign;
  - ii. the 'Futures 25' efficiency planning and workforce review started during 2022/23, and is now entering phase 2, in which current structures and efficiencies will be examined to ensure that the Service can deliver to meet the needs of communities. A full update will be submitted to the Fire Authority;
  - iii. there had recently been a higher than usual turnover of staff, which has slowed and returned to expected rates. It appears that this was a national trend of resignations following the pandemic;
  - iv. as a result of an on-call firefighter recruitment drive, 33 applicants had been successful, but a 10% turnover is predicted. Recruitment and retention are a challenge but work is ongoing to address this;
  - v. it takes 2-4 years to train Fire Safety Officers but there is a national shortage as fire safety regulations and requirements continue to be extended;
  
- c) With regard to positive workplace and culture:
  - i. the Service maintains good two-way communication with colleagues and has introduced a revised behavioural framework to further support this;
  - ii. values and culture have been specifically highlighted as an important area by the review of the London Fire Brigade (LFB);
  
- d) inclusion is promoted throughout the Service and the communities it serves, with positive recruitment activity, but it is recognised that there is still work to be done;
  - i. much work has been done to develop employee networks;
  - ii. the Community Engagement Plan has objectives to enhance relationships with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, with work ongoing to

ensure that all communities understand the role of the Service, not only in attending incidents but also preventative work;

- e) Health and wellbeing is recognised as an essential element of creating a positive workplace, particularly with the physical, mental and emotional demands of the Service, and where fitness is integral to the role;
  - i. the extension of the working age to 60 for operational staff and 67 for other staff results in additional health and wellbeing requirements to maintain fitness;
  - ii. those in operational roles who are unable to maintain the required fitness levels, for whatever reason, may be offered the opportunity to transfer to non-operational roles to support their employment with the Service;
- f) sickness absence levels and causes are closely monitored and considered, with appropriate support provided to help staff return to work. It is acknowledged that further work is required to better promote the health and wellbeing support available for staff to self-refer or freely access, including peer support;
- g) All staff undergo medical examinations every 3 years and there is an externally operated Employee Assistance Programme which staff can access without the Service being informed, and is most commonly accessed for mental health support;
- h) The Occupational Health Team has now returned to full establishment numbers, following a period of high staff turnover;
- i) The Firefighter's Charity also provides valuable support on many levels and access to Blue Light support for emergency services is also accessible;
- j) It is not easy to gauge the success of the work to promote wellbeing as not all elements record engagement and report it to the Service to prove an increase in support uptake, but any increase would be considered positive.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report, the improvements made to date and proposed.

**Resolved to note the report.**

## **24 Whole-time Recruitment Process 2022**

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, and Nick Linthwaite, Human Resource's Manager, presented the report which updates the Committee on outcomes from the whole-time firefighter selection process which concluded in October 2022.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The target number for whole-time recruitment was up to 36;

- b) The process was delayed due to budget issues and awaiting the outcome of the Fire Cover Review;
- c) A 3 month programme of engagement and promotion undertook several routes of positive activity with a focus on attracting citizens with characteristics under-represented in the operational workforce, including women, BAME and minority ethnic groups, and LGBT potential candidates;
- d) To attract interest, the Service held a variety of events and activities, including multimedia promotions, 'have a go' sessions, and promotion of apprenticeship schemes offered by the Service;
- e) Of the 168 applicants who engaged with the positive action, 40 were women and 49 were from a BAME background;
- f) 18 of the 29 appointments (62%) who were involved in positive action were successful, 9 (31%) being female and four (13.8%) being BAME applicants;
- g) 10% of all applications were from LGBT+ applicants which was the highest group success rate;
- h) The report sets out a breakdown of the numbers of applicants that failed/dropped out at each stage of the process, including by characteristic;
- i) It is acknowledged that ongoing work is required to become more reflective of the community it serves;
- j) Further youth engagement work is proposed, including approaching schools, existing youth organisations and creating cadet schemes, which will also target under-represented groups;
- k) A lot of ground work has already been successfully laid with community leaders who welcome the Service's interest and engagement;
- l) In addition to new recruits, there were 2 transfers from other Services and 6 migrations from on-call to whole-time posts.

Members of the Committee welcomed the success of the innovative positive action recruitment activity.

**Resolved to note the report.**

## **25 HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight Report**

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report, which informs the Committee of the recommendations from the spotlight review of the 'Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services', by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) Specific themes of values and culture (including bullying, harassment, and discrimination), training and skills, fairness and diversity, and leadership were considered;
- b) It is noted that during initial inspections of 2018, concerns around the long standing culture and values of some Services had been raised by HMICFRS, and whilst approximately half of all Services had made good progress in addressing concerns, the others still required further work and received an 'inadequate' rating;
- c) Some examples of bad behaviour were found in other Services where staff did not feel confident in challenging inappropriate behaviour;
- d) 34 recommendations were made, all of which are listed in Appendix A to the report, 19 of which were specifically tasked to CFOs, and are to be fully implemented within 12 months;
- e) Prior to the HMICFRS Inspections, NFRS was already working hard on equalities and was rated as 'Good' for People, Values and Culture, but there is no room for complacency, so the Service continues to work to improve its current position, with the dedicated Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead Officer and Strategy Team creating the EDI Plan;
- f) Progress of the EDI is monitored monthly by the Chief Fire Officer, who also receives regular updates to ensure the continued progress of embedding values and behaviours into the culture of the Service.

Members of the Committee welcomed the progress, ongoing activity, achievement of a 'good' rating and the ambition to achieve an 'outstanding' rating in this hugely important area.

**Resolved to:**

- 1) note the content of the report from HMICFRS;**
- 2) support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in addressing the Service's continued cultural journey;**
- 3) accept to receive updates against the specific HMICFRS recommendations.**