



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

REVIEW OF WORKFORCE PLAN 2022-24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 10 November 2023

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on progress against the Workforce Plan 2022-24.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Workforce Plan 2022-2024 forms part of the business planning process which supports the delivery of the Strategic Plan and is undertaken by the People and Organisational Development (POD) department to establish workforce trends, identify potential workforce planning issues and formulate an action plan to address these issues. The plan is based upon projections of anticipated turnover and information received from all departments regarding their workforce needs for the forthcoming year.
- 1.2 The plan seeks to forecast:
- Workforce reductions through retirement, projected turnover and other factors;
 - Workforce increases resulting from delivery of new service requirements;
 - The need for succession planning for specialist and managerial roles;
 - Particular areas of concern within the Service;
 - Resource requirements.
- 1.3 By anticipating the needs of the Service through the business planning process, the Service can ensure that the foundations are in place to deliver on key Service objectives and commitments which will underpin the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) Community Risk Management Plan. These needs can then be factored into the budget planning process.
- 1.4 This Plan is developed and managed through the Strategic Leadership Team.

2. REPORT

REVIEW 2022-2024

- 2.1 The Human Resources Committee approved a revised Workforce Plan for the period 2022-2024 at its meeting on 23 June 2023. This update reflects mid-year position for the period April to September 2023.
- 2.2 A significant part of the Plan anticipates turnover and recruitment requirements based on workforce projections for each work group.

WHOLETIME WORKFORCE

- 2.3 The wholetime establishment is currently 431 posts. The current workforce is 416.6, which represents a shortfall of 14.4 roles.
- 2.4 There have been 27 new starters to wholetime roles during the review period, the majority of which have been to apprentice firefighter roles recruited as part of the 2022 campaign. 11 started their NFRS career in April and 12 are

currently on their initial training course at Service Development Centre (SDC) and will be posted to stations in December. Three additional apprentice firefighters commenced their training in the Prevention team and will start their operational training at SDC in April 2024. The Service also recruited an additional area manager on a 12-month secondment to support the delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan.

- 2.5 There have been 16 leavers between April and September. 11 due to retirements and five for other reasons. This is within workforce projections.
- 2.6 In order to further address this shortfall, the Service has recently implemented a number of measures including the transfer of 15 operational roles (11 firefighters, 2 crew and 2 watch managers) into the Service. In addition, a wholetime recruitment process is underway to recruit to apprentice firefighter roles during 2024. This recruitment process will conclude in February 2024 and the Service is seeking to recruit up to 32 new apprentice firefighters.
- 2.7 A recent change to establishment has released four current operational posts to support the resourcing of Service priorities, resource to the current Community Risk Management Plan commitments, and support the mitigation of current corporate risks. This was approved by the Authority at its meeting on 3 July 2023 as part of the 'resourcing to risk' report.
- 2.8 There have been five promotion processes undertaken since April for crew, watch, station, group and area manager roles, resulting in the appointment of 18 individuals to higher level roles. These are scheduled as part of succession planning to fill and anticipate vacancies arising, predominantly through retirements, and to provide temporary development opportunities.
- 2.9 The Service is also currently recruiting to an Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) position due to the retirement of ACFO Candida Brudenell in January 2024. Interviews will be undertaken by the Appointments Committee on 1 December 2023.
- 2.10 Work to support the conversion of Ashfield from a mixed-crewing to wholetime station, in line with the decision of the Authority on 24 February 2023, has been progressing during the review period. The majority of moves have been confirmed and the station will revert back to a wholetime duty system from 29 November 2023.

ON-CALL WORKFORCE

- 2.11 The number of employees providing on-call cover currently stands at 245, of which 77 are dual contracts.
- 2.12 There have been nine leavers and 13 new appointments to trainee firefighter roles between April and September. This is below workforce projections.

- 2.13 Campaigning for on-call personnel runs constantly throughout the year, with events held at local stations to promote engagement with local communities, and with central support provided by the on-call and human resources teams.

SUPPORT WORKFORCE

- 2.14 The current support establishment stands at 162 posts (150.3fte), which accounts for four full-time vacancies. There are currently 11 fixed term appointments covering vacancies or providing additional resources.
- 2.15 There have been ten leavers and 14 new appointments between April and September 2023. The number of leavers is within workforce projections. Of these, two have been due to retirement and one due to the expiry of fixed-term contracts.
- 2.16 The higher levels of turnover and difficulty in recruiting to administrative, technical and professional support roles was predicted in the Workforce Plan as a reflection of a national upturn in turnover across all sectors and the gap between private and public sector salaries. Recent cost-of-living increases have exacerbated this pay differential. This is recorded in the Corporate Risk Register as a potential risk to the Service. The national employers are currently in consultation with unions on the 2023-24 pay settlement.
- 2.17 However, the reduction in turnover compared to last year (26 in 2022) and increase in the number of appointments (10 in 2022), for the same period does indicate that there has been an improvement in recruitment and retention of support employees during 2023.
- 2.18 Work to progress the Futures 25 efficiency programme has commenced, with a review of Prevention activities underway. The outcomes from this work will have workforce implications, as reported in the Plan, which will be reported to Members. Specific workstreams within the programme with workforce implications include:
- Resource demands in corporate support, ICT, finance and community engagement roles;
 - A review of how Prevention activities are delivered;
 - A review of recruitment governance, process and systems review;
 - On-call pay and conditions.

OTHER WORKFORCE ISSUES

- 2.19 The need to make the workforce more representative and diverse continues to be a priority for the Service, with the aim of improving the current workforce profile to better reflect the local population. Positive action has been undertaken to encourage applicants who are under-represented in the workforce to apply for wholtime firefighter positions and success rates will be reported to the Committee at the end of the current process. Equalities monitoring information is contained within a separate report on the agenda.

- 2.20 A focus on employee well-being and improved sickness absence rates were also identified within the workforce plan. Sickness absence rates saw a decrease in Quarter One compared to the comparative period of 2022, but an increase in Quarter Two, and more detail is set out within the monitoring information contained within the human resources update report.
- 2.21 Work undertaken to enhance well-being provision was set out at the last meeting of this Committee in June. Since this time, employees have been able to make use of a new facility to order home and electrical items from the benefits site (up to £1000) and pay for these through salary deductions. This recognises the financial pressures many families are experiencing and reduces the need for employees to take out short-term loans or pay interest for essential home items. This is in addition to the Cycle to Work scheme and savings website that are also available.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The management of establishment levels is key to the overall management of staffing budgets which constitute 80% of the overall revenue budget. Accurate predictions are always difficult, but are still essential to budget setting with issues such as the overall establishment, the distribution of staff within roles and the numbers of staff in development all having considerable influence on budgets.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Human resources implications are contained within the report. It should be noted that a recent change to establishment has released four current operational posts to support the resourcing of Service priorities, resource to the current Community Risk Management Plan commitments, and support the mitigation of current corporate risks.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

As this is a review of the approved Workforce Plan an equality impact assessment has not been undertaken. However, equalities implications arising from future workforce recommendations will be assessed for any likely impact on workforce or service delivery.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Workforce planning is key to ensuring that the Service has the requisite number of employees with the skills and competence to fulfil statutory obligations, meet Service objectives and ensure business continuity, within available budgets.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER