



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

UPDATE ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 04 May 2018

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update to Members on activities undertaken since the previous review in October 2017.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 21 April 2017, the People Strategy was presented and endorsed by the Human Resources Committee.
- 1.2 As part of monitoring arrangements, it was agreed that an update would be submitted to the Committee on a six-monthly basis to keep Members advised on progress. The last update was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 20 October 2017.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The People Strategy aligns closely with the Service's Organisational Development and Inclusion (ODI) Strategy and supports the Service transformation and improvement programme. The key areas identified in the ODI Strategy are service improvement, employee engagement, harnessing technology, strong and visible leadership and inclusion and equality. Progress against these objectives is reported through the Policy and Strategy Committee.
- 2.2 The focus for the People Strategy is set below:



- 2.3 **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. Many of the aims inherent within this part of the strategy relate to work being undertaken by the Shaping Our Future Team, and will be implemented by Service Delivery. The main impact of any agreed outcomes for human resources, to the way that services are

delivered, will be at the point of implementation, with anticipated changes to individual roles and training implications.

- 2.4 A firefighter selection process opened on 5 March 2018 and will be completed in July. The first trainee course will commence in September. This is the first time that the Service has undertaken whole-time firefighter recruitment since 2012 and ensures a sustainable operational workforce, considering projected turnover, through to 2020. The process itself is resource intensive and requires significant input from the human resources and learning and development departments, with support from all areas of the Service. Positive action work has been undertaken in the run-up to the campaign with the aim of encouraging more women and minority ethnic applicants to apply. Further details are set out later in the report.
- 2.5 Negotiation with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and consultation with employees over proposed changes to the rostering collective agreement have been undertaken over recent months with the aim of releasing capacity to support the aims of the Sustainability Strategy. These changes are now being implemented.
- 2.6 The safe and well initiative extends current home safety checks undertaken by the Service to include information on non-fire specific risks during a scheduled visit. This initiative links in with other partner agencies, and supports the aim of allowing vulnerable people in communities to maintain independent living in their own homes. The training of crews to undertake the enhanced checks is now well underway and a pilot has been undertaken.
- 2.7 The Service has developed many partnerships to enhance the delivery of services to Nottinghamshire residents. There has been focus placed on developing further collaboration opportunities, to create efficiencies and improve provision, over recent months, and discussions with the Nottinghamshire Police and neighbouring fire and rescue services have resulted in proposals which are set out within the report.
- 2.8 **Shaping our Workforce:** the Sustainability Strategy, agreed by the Authority, in 2016, is the focus for planned changes and includes re-negotiation of the rostering collective agreement, alternate delivery models such as voluntary secondary working arrangements to enhance retained firefighting cover, flexible retained firefighter contracts, alternative crewing arrangements for RDS sections, and mixed crewing at designated stations.
- 2.9 In September, the Fire Authority agreed proposals to implement mixed crewing at Ashfield and Retford fire stations, and to roll out alternative crewing to retained sections. These changes will be introduced incrementally during 2018-19, and managed through a dedicated project group. The Human Resources (HR) Department are part of the project group and are involved in co-ordinating the transfer of personnel from and to the mixed crewing stations, consulting with those individuals affected and advising on contractual issues. The Learning and Development (L&D) team will provide any training required to ensure the appropriate skills are in place to support these changes.

- 2.10 HR and L&D will support the recruitment and training of new retained personnel to Ashfield and Retford fire stations to provide the additional resources required to implement the mixed crewing model. This will be factored in to the 2018-19 RDS recruitment programme.
- 2.11 Consultation on Voluntary Secondary Arrangements (VSA) is now complete and the HR team will support the implementation of this initiative by co-ordinating internal recruitment on a twice-yearly basis, and the maintenance of a central register of volunteers. The intention of VSA is primarily to provide support to the retained duty system to maintain appliance availability.
- 2.12 **Outstanding Leadership:** as previously reported, an NFRS Leadership Strategy has been published to set out the development pathway for existing and future leaders of the Service. The strategy provides a framework of competencies, professional / vocational qualification and behaviours that are required and developed at different stages of a career; from those aspiring to their first supervisory role to a strategic manager. The leadership programmes will provide the core learning needed to ensure technical and managerial competence.
- 2.13 At a national level, a guidance document “Inspiring Leadership in FRS” has been produced by the People Strategy Working Group to support local delivery of a cohesive leadership development programme, and work will be undertaken to align the recommendations from this guidance with the Service’s own leadership programme over the next few months. Additionally, discussions have been held with Nottinghamshire Police to explore common leadership development needs with the aim of sharing provision from 2019.
- 2.14 The new Aspiring Leaders programme commenced in December 2017, and is aimed at employees considering their first leadership role. Thirty-one employees have enrolled and attended workshops on subjects such as Building Your Resilience, Interview Techniques, Coaching, Overview of Organisational Development and Inclusion and Springboard (women’s development programme) and six participants have also commenced an ILM Level 3 award. Whilst participation is voluntary, this is a way of identifying and developing future leaders and providing participants with the tools to become effective managers.
- 2.15 A new leadership programme accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (Level 5) and delivered as an apprenticeship by Sheffield College has recently commenced. This is an 18-month programme for middle managers and is funded through the apprenticeship levy.
- 2.16 **Workforce Development:** the e-learning team has continued to develop new packages for the NFRSLearn site; in the past six months published modules include both practical operational and leadership material. Access to e-learning supports the development and assessment of technical knowledge in the workplace and reduces the classroom time required to deliver this essential training and maintain operational competence. Additionally, there is

access to a wealth of external resources to develop learning across a wide range of subjects which is openly available to all employees.

- 2.17 Coaching is an important element of the personal development programme and the Service has developed a coaching network with over 22 practising coaches. A coaching approach to development is a key part of the Organisational Development Strategy and supports the work to effect cultural change. Discussions have been held with Nottinghamshire Police about sharing coaching networks both to enrich the coaching experience and to provide a platform to build personal relationships and promote shared understanding between the respective services.
- 2.18 Work has also been ongoing to identify ways in which the Service can share development and delivery of training and development with other partners to identify any efficiencies or improved effectiveness. This could include joint usage of training facilities, shared e-learning packages or joint events.
- 2.19 Agreement has been reached with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service to undertake compartmental fire behaviour training at the Ripley Training Centre from September 2018, and discussions are taking place to establish joint water first responder and working at height courses, with pilots planned for later in 2018. Discussions with Nottinghamshire Police to look at joint leadership training, shared e-learning and driver training are also taking place.
- 2.20 **Workforce Engagement:** staff conferences have been held on 19 and 24 April and 1 May. Topics covered included a reflection on the past year and future challenges by the Chief Fire Officer, and provided an opportunity for participants from across the Service to engage in discussions around current issues and learn about future developments.
- 2.21 An employee survey was launched in early March, facilitated by an external consultancy, Quality Health, and survey outcomes will be reported in June.
- 2.22 Consultation on the proposed changes to the delivery model which has resulted in the implementation of mixed crewing and alternative crewing has seen each watch visited by a member of the Strategic Leadership Team and Shaping Our Future team to explain the rationale behind the proposals and to listen to feedback from staff. These visits will become embedded into an annual programme to ensure two-way engagement and feedback with all employees.
- 2.23 **Positive Workplace and Culture:** work to promote and embed the Service's core values 'Value and Respect', 'Open to Change', 'Professional' and 'One Team' continues to ensure that the Service's values ('the way we do things') underpins the culture of the Service. This includes referencing the values within all internal messages wherever possible, for instance the use of promotional posters which highlight examples of when employees have behaved in accordance with the Service values and the positive impact this has had on those who receive services. It is also referenced in our induction and development programmes.

- 2.24 The 'Little Acorns' employee suggestion scheme received 97 separate suggestions, and a further 17 have been received so far in 2018. Forty in total since the last report. This indicates a positive interest from our employees in improving services.
- 2.25 **A Safe and Healthy Workplace:** the Service's long-standing membership of the Westfield Health Scheme ended in December 2017 and has been replaced by a corporate BUPA cash back plan and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) called 'Life and Progress'. The BUPA scheme provides funding toward dental and optical care, therapy treatments, consultations and includes some dependant benefits for family members.
- 2.26 The EAP scheme offers support and advice on a range of health, financial, work and legal issues, including access to counselling services where appropriate. The aim of the provision is to provide access to independent support and advice to alleviate issues which may lead to stress and anxiety and help to maintain employee health and well-being.
- 2.27 An on-site physiotherapy service also commenced in January through the Response Group, which provides weekly access to a physiotherapist based in the Occupational Health department. Musculo-skeletal injury is the main cause of sickness absence and providing dedicated support ensures that employees receive immediate treatment to support rehabilitation or to prevent escalation of conditions which may result in future absence.
- 2.28 **Inclusion:** positive action events have been undertaken over recent months ahead of the firefighter recruitment campaign. These events are open to all but with a view to encouraging women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic applicants, who are currently under-represented in the operational workforce, to consider a career with the Service. Eleven events have been undertaken at various venues at weekends and 217 people have attended during this time. Mentoring events have also taken place to prepare applicants for the selection process. The Service has worked closely with the Nottingham City Council recruitment team who have provided significant support, and will also assist with the assessment centre.
- 2.29 A questionnaire has been issued to female employees to seek views on how the Service could improve their experience at work, particularly in terms of gender specific issues such as maternity, health and welfare, uniform and the impact of the menopause. The outcomes from the survey will result in an action plan and a working group will be established to take forward suggestions.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Human resources and learning and development implications are contained within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as the People Strategy does not directly affect policy or service delivery, however proposals arising from individual work-streams will be subject to an equality impact assessment at the development and implementation stages.

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 the workforce.
- 8.2 Evidence of effective workforce planning and commitment to equality and inclusion will form part of any future inspection undertaken by the HMICFRS.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As set out in the report, the Service is actively seeking collaboration opportunities with the Nottinghamshire Police and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service in several areas of service activity, including learning and development.
- 9.2 The Service has worked closely with Nottingham City Council recruitment team to deliver positive action events in preparation for the whole-time firefighter recruitment campaign, and they will play an active role in the assessment of candidates.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER