



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER VACANCY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 27 September 2019

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval for the recruitment to the vacancy of Assistant Chief Fire Officer following the successful appointment of the previous incumbent to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

CONTACT OFFICER

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Chief Fire Officer

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following approval of a report to the Fire Authority in February 2019, the previous Assistant Chief Fire Officer was successfully appointed as the Deputy Chief Fire Officer resulting in a vacancy for Assistant being created.
- 1.2 At that time, it was agreed to put in place an internal temporary arrangement to allow a process of review and bring forward recommendations to a future meeting of the Authority. That review has now been concluded by the Chief Fire Officer and this report provides those recommendations.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The role of Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) has three distinct facets, namely; the direct leadership and responsibility for a significant number of functions within the organisation; provision of strategic operational cover as part of the Brigade Manager on-call rota; and finally, to provide advice and support to Members of the Authority as part of the Strategic Team.
- 2.3 In 2013 the then Chief Fire Officer undertook a review of the senior team, which at that time consisted of five Principal Officers. That revision led to one of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer roles being deleted in May 2014.
- 2.4 In October 2015 a further review under the current Chief Fire Officer led to the deletion of the Assistant Chief Officer role and a redistribution of functions to the remaining three Principal Officers. A number of changes were also made to the posts at the level below Principal Officer, in that individuals' responsibilities were increased and parity was created across 'Head of Department' roles.
- 2.5 In 2018 Members agreed to maintain the current level of three Principal Officers, and following review, the Chief Fire Officer believes this is correct resourcing requirement. This is based on the need to respond to a changing landscape of risk following the Grenfell tragedy, the Government's reform agenda, expectations contained within the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the inspection regime by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.6 In recognition of the recent reductions within the number of strategic roles, and the growing expectations placed upon the Service, it is proposed that the current level of three Principal Officers is maintained. This is consistent with many other Services of a similar size.
- 2.7 Another factor to consider is that the number of applicants who apply for Principal Officer roles can be small, as the traditional requirement to seek candidates from purely operational backgrounds limits the number of potential applicants considerably as they must come from within the sector.

- 2.8 In recent years a number of Services have appointed to Principal Officer roles from outside of the sector, and although the individuals do not have the tactical operational competence to manage an incident on scene, they are able to develop the competence to provide strategic command within the context of a Strategic Co-ordinating Group.
- 2.9 This range of competence is the main area of command undertaken by Principal Officers and is similar to the requirements placed on all senior leaders across the Local Authority landscape who provide strategic cover. The Chief Fire Officer believes that with a structured training and development programme, senior leaders from outside of the sector would be able to satisfy the operational rota requirements.
- 2.10 By opening the process to candidates outside of the sector, Members will be able to consider each individual on their own merits and ensure they have the opportunity to select the most appropriate candidate for the role in terms of overall team dynamic and skill set.
- 2.11 The selection process for the ACFO post is extensive and will involve the convening of the Appointments Committee to assess the candidates and provide recommendations, with an expectation that an appointment could be confirmed at either the December or February meeting of the Fire Authority.
- 2.12 To support the process and ensure the relevant expertise is in place, it is proposed that external recruitment specialists are contracted to assist in the appointments process. Furthermore, an operational assessment will need to be undertaken to ensure candidates have the ability to develop the relevant strategic command expertise. A budget of £20k will be created from anticipated in year underspends to support this.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The use of external consultants to support the process is likely to cost in the region of £15-20k. This will be funded from anticipated in year underspends within the revenue budget.
- 3.2 The salary range for the post is £105,573 to £117,303. Appointment to the post would normally be at the lowest point and increase over two years so there is potential for short term revenue savings to be realised.
- 3.3 As the post holder is required to reside within the county, a relocation package is offered if the successful candidate is required to move.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are significant human resources implications arising from this report, but all can be managed by the internal human resources team with the assistance of specialist external support for which a budget of £20k has been identified.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as this report does not suggest any changes to policy or service delivery functions.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The main aspects of this process will need to comply with appropriate employment and equalities legislation.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Temporary cover in such a senior role within the organisation carries the potential risk of loss of continuity and capacity. This is currently being managed, however it is important to progress with the recruitment process and establish certainty. The estimated timescales within the body of the report do not represent any cause for concern.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members task the Chief Fire Officer to work with the Clerk to the Authority to put in place a recruitment process for the Assistant Chief Fire Officer vacancy.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER