

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority Meeting

Date: 27th July 2022

Subject: Workforce Planning and Service Establishment

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: Callum Faint, The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

For: Decision

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) of workforce planning and total establishment numbers within the Service and to request permission to increase the establishment in preparation for withdrawal and introduction of changes to the Day Crewing Plus duty system.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) the Combined Fire Authority approves an establishment change from 348 to 390, accounting for organisational structure changes and to meet the establishment needs as result of attrition, retirement and the change to the Day Crewing Plus (DCP) duty system; and
 - b) the Combined Fire Authority delegates authority to the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to recruit the required number of employees needed to meet the increase of the establishment as a result of moving away from the DCP duty system.

Executive Summary

3. This report sets out the service establishment numbers following the recent organisational structure changes as a result of approval of the 2022/23 budget and the increase in the council tax precept. The current planning assumptions in relation to workforce planning and an overview of the current position for both Green Book and Grey Book members of staff is provided.
4. The report also outlines a recruitment proposal plan, agreed by workforce planning, which seeks to recruit the required number of firefighters needed as a result of predicted leavers and the change in duty systems as a result of the move away from DCP.

Background

5. In 2021 the CFA gave the Chief Fire Officer permission to over establish in order to make timely plans to prepare to move at least one station away from DCP to trial new policies and procedures. This requires an additional 12 people, on top of the agreed establishment of 348, for each station transitioned.
6. All viable options for withdrawing from DCP will increase the establishment number. The exact details of this will be known post public consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in 2024. However, funding for these roles came into effect in April 2022 following CFA approval of the £5 flexibility on the precept.
7. The current agreed establishment for Green Book employees is 124 full time equivalent. This includes the recent changes to the organisational structure, which provided seven new roles to enable improvements to service delivery. For information, the full time equivalent (FTE) measure is used as the actual head count and can vary due to some roles being filled with part-time workers, i.e. one role can be filled by two part-time employees. Of the 124 Green Book posts, 121 are filled as of 6 July 2022 and plans are in place to recruit to the remaining vacant posts.
8. The current agreed establishment for Whole-time (WT) operational posts is 348. This includes all wholetime uniformed staff (station based, fire protection, prevention, training instructors and the officer cadre).
9. As of 6 July 2022 the actual establishment is 353.5 FTE. Eleven new recruits are joining the Service in August to meet the requirement as detailed in paragraph 5. Predictions from workforce planning indicate that by January 2023 the WT FTE will be 354.5. This figure is based on expected retirements and predicted attrition from the service but is highly variable on individual choices and variances may be positive or negative to this number.
10. With these factors considered it is necessary to change the approved establishment numbers of wholetime staff. This includes two additional uniformed posts within Training and Development (agreed by the CFA on 15 June 2022) and to recruit suitable numbers to enable an effective and planned withdrawal of DCP upon completion of public consultation and publication of the IRMP.
11. Subject to approval of the CFA, the establishment numbers would be increased from 348 to 390 to incorporate all the relevant factors, and delegate authority to the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to recruit to these posts up to April 2024.
12. Once the IRMP has been consulted upon and the option for DCP withdrawal is confirmed, the CFA will be presented with an establishment update to ensure the agreed establishment meets the delivery needs of the Service.

13. The current agreed maximum headcount for On-call operational posts is 279. As of 6 July 2022, the actual headcount is 214.
14. As per the outcomes of the RDS Project Group hours of availability at operational stations have been revised and are now embedded. The current agreed requirement therefore is now 29,863 hours. Of this figure 51.9% (-14341 hours) of total cover requirement is vacant.
15. The FTE establishment for Fire Control is 25. The current employee FTE is 25.

Workforce Planning

16. To fill the current vacancies the service is actively running recruitment campaigns for Green Book employees and has recently concluded a campaign for On-call firefighters, with another programmed for autumn 2022.
17. Workforce planning has reviewed the current establishment levels for Whole-time firefighters and officers, and has forecast requirements in the number of new employees required. This has used the planning assumptions of 31 employees who can retire (between August 2022 and December 2023) and a predicted attrition rate of 6 per year.
18. However, it has to be noted that no WT employee is required to retire and can, if they wish, remain as a Grey Book employee for as long as they meet the requirements of the role in terms of fitness to perform it. Workforce planning also considers the number of people who could retire and have not yet when formulating a workforce plan.
19. The Service has a requirement to move away from the DCP system. Whilst this will be subject to public consultation and form part of the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), it is necessary to ensure that the Service has in place the necessary WT employees with the right skills to accommodate whatever agreed duty system(s) are to replace DCP. This requires an average of an additional 12 employees, made up of Watch Manager, Crew Managers and Firefighters.
20. In preparation for this change and to ensure that the necessary people skills and numbers are in place to enable as smooth a transition as possible, there is a need to recruit and increase the WT establishment in advance.
21. The benefit of going to recruitment early and having the WT over-establishment is that any training can be aggregated in respect of the volume of recruit firefighters over a longer period in advance of the required change point. This reduces the risk of a bottle-neck situation in terms of recruitment points, initial training and achievement of firefighter competence, thus allowing the preparation and change of duty systems to be more effectively managed, due to having a more experienced workforce at the time of change.

Report Implications/Impact

22. Legal (including crime and disorder)

Fair, recruitment processes (Equality Act 2010)

23. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

Potential over establishment of Firefighters

Support to set LFRS up to deliver Firefighter Apprenticeship (this will be recovered from the levy)

For the future workforce planning – strategic spend on identified development needs and establishment spend linked to strategic aims.

24. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

There is a risk that appliance availability may be adversely affected by not recruiting or having the appropriate skills available.

There is identified risk as a result of the HR team at maximum capacity for recruitment and delays in recruiting into key roles.

25. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders will be impacted at all levels by the recruitment and promotions processes, each procedure has been subjected to its own Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

26. Environmental

None identified within this report.

27. Impact upon Our Plan Objective

The Workforce Planning actively supports our purpose of safer people, safer places and the People strategic aim of an engaged and productive workforce; the right people, in the right place, doing the right thing, in the right way.

Officers to Contact

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