

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 19 June 2019

Subject: Firefighter Recruitment

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For: Information Only

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) of the action required to recruit firefighters to meet the needs of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) up to 2020/21.

Recommendation

2. The CFA is asked to note the planned approach to Fire Fighter recruitment for 2019.

Executive Summary

3. This report updates the CFA on firefighter recruitment activity following consideration of a report at its meeting in December 2018 which detailed the Fire Fighter vacancies (up to March 2021) and predicted a requirement of 34 Fire Fighters (10% of establishment shortfall), to be recruited in 2 phases. The CFA accepted the report and recognised that more needed to be done to ensure that the workforce reflected the diversity of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area.
4. A 'blended' approach was approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in September 2018 and noted by the CFA in December 2018. The workforce planning was designed to address the short and medium term needs of the service and reduce the burden on Learning and Development.
5. The Corporate Governance Committee considered a report on Fire Fighter recruitment at its meeting in January 2019 and asked that a report regarding the proposals for a recruitment campaign during 2019 be presented to the CFA in June 2019.
6. Since the workforce planning assumptions were carried out, a number of unexpected leavers through resignation and ill health retirements have occurred. We aim to increase the second phase of recruitment from 10 new

starters to 18 to ensure establishment is reached and maintained. A blended approach will be adopted to fulfil the requirement.

7. Work will continue to build on Positive Action and engagement events to promote LFRS as an employer and as a career opportunity.

Background

Recruitment – Whole Time

8. Whole time recruitment had not been undertaken for a number of years due to austerity cuts. In 2017 a cycle of recruitment began to maintain operational Fire Fighter numbers to meet our establishment requirements based on a workforce plan for recruitment (operational staff) up to 2020.
9. This work was reviewed and approved by SMT as a resourcing plan on 24 September 2018. This outlined a blended recruitment sourcing approach for a further total of 34 firefighters up to 2020, including transfers (exact mix and number to be determined for each phase and source of recruits).
10. A blended sourcing approach of candidates will reduce the burden on Learning and Development to train numbers of new recruits and satisfy immediate operational requirements and includes:
 - a. Recruitment via transfers from other services - this provides a short lead time to have fully competent Fire Fighters placed in roles without delay to meet the needs of front line service delivery.
 - b. Recruitment via migration from our on-call workforce. Again a much shorter lead time to have fully competent fire fighters placed in roles without delay to meet the needs of front line service delivery.
 - c. Whole time full recruitment process.
11. By adopting these revised numbers and approach, by March 2020 the staffing establishment is predicted to stabilise and should the recruitment plan be successful, will leave the Service over established by 1.5 full time equivalents (FTE).
12. As at April 2019 (Phase1) 24 of the 34 places have been recruited to via the previously agreed blended approach. 9 new Fire Fighters commenced induction and training in April 2019 and will be working on stations from July 2019.
13. Phase 2 recruitment will commence in September 2019 with new Fire Fighters commencing training in January 2020 and working on stations from April 2020. Originally, 10 recruits were planned, and this has been revised to 18 to meet service need.

Equality and Diversity

14. The table below illustrates the success that LFRS has had in improving the diversity of new Fire Fighters over the last 2 campaigns as a result of positive action and events such as 'Have a Go Days' targeted at under- represented groups. Similar positive action activity will underpin Phase 2 recruitment.

| | 2017/18 Campaign | % Females | 2018/19 Campaign | % Females |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Total Females | 4 | | 3 | |
| White British | 2 | 50% | 1 | 33% |
| BAME | 2 | 50% | 2 | 67% |
| | | % Males | | % Males |
| Total Males | 15 | | 5 | |
| White British | 12 | 80% | 1 | 20% |
| BAME | 3 | 20% | 4 | 80% |
| | | | | |
| Prefer not to say | 0 | | 1 | |
| Total personnel recruited | 19 | | 9 | |
| % of Intake | 2017 Campaign | 2019 Campaign | | |
| % Total Female | 21% | 33% | | |
| % Total Male | 79% | 56% | | |
| % Prefer not to say | 0% | 11% | | |

15. The 2018/19 cohort of new 9 Fire Fighters is more reflective of the communities we serve as a result of positive action supported by the Service's activity through the Strategic Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Board (SEDIB) and the Tactical Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Board (TEDIB) and workforce interest groups. This includes activity such as engagement events with communities led by interest groups to promote Fire Fighting as a career. LFRS attended Leicester Employability on 29 May 2019, a first time event to be held in Leicester, which targets young people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background to promote careers available in Leicester. Events attended in 2018 included the Caribbean Carnival and Pride; these will continue to be instrumental in supporting positive action campaigns.
16. An example of how positive action has been used was to stage 'Have a go Days' targeted at BAME and females. LFRS ran two female only 'Have a go Days'. These were scheduled 12 weeks apart in order to measure progression on the fitness/strength testing elements. Females who attended the first session and were unsuccessful in passing the 'ladder lift' were given a development plan for fitness and upper body strength. On the first session there was only a 30% pass rate, on the second event once development had been undertaken a 70% pass rate was achieved.
17. There are two strands to positive action under the Equality Act 2010. "AFSA and Capsticks – Diversity and Positive Action Briefing note for Fire and Rescue Services" explains duties and what Fire and Rescue services can do (attached at Appendix 1). LFRS must be mindful that they do not positively discriminate by treating an individual with a protected characteristic more favourably.

Recruitment – On-Call

18. The recruitment campaign (number RBC 02/19) resulted in nine new on call Fire Fighters commencing service on 3 May 2019. Of these, three (33%) new starters were female, six (66%) male; 100% were white British. It is to be noted that the locations of on-call stations are predominantly county- based and reflect the ethnicity of the community they serve. Focus on positive action in on-call recruitment has been focussed on attracting more female recruits, attending schools. The On-call service also run 'Have a go Days' which include female fire fighters attending to 'story tell' of their journey in order to encourage applications from females.
19. The recruitment campaign (number RBC 03/19) advert closed on 30 May 2019, 28 applications have been received. Shortlisting testing and interviews should be complete by 15 June 2019, with a view for recruits to commence service on 30 August 2019.

Report Implications/Impact

20. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The Equality Act 2010 generally prohibits positive discrimination i.e. treating a person with a 'protected characteristic' more favourably than people who do not share that characteristic (unless it is an occupational requirement or the protected characteristic is disability). The Act does however permit "positive action" in recruitment and promotion to overcome or minimise disadvantages that the employer reasonably believes are faced by persons with a protected characteristic but this is subject to certain conditions being met to avoid any such favourable treatment from constituting unlawful positive discrimination. Legal advice on recent case law on this point has been sought and taken into account to ensure compliance.

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

The recruitment budget is £30,000.
Over-establishment salary costs due to the lead time of training recruits has been budgeted for and set aside in ear-marked reserves should the need arise to access these funds in the sum of £230,000.

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

Not having enough and sufficiently skilled operational resource at the right time could impact on the delivery of services and the Integrated Risk Management Plan improvement projects.

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

Open and transparent promotions and recruitment processes are taking place with plans that will be publicised.

Equalities Impact Assessments on the stages of recruitment have been completed ensuring that any issues were addressed.

'Have a Go' days to promote positive action from under-represented groups took place and will continue to be used to promote diversity from candidate pools, alongside other community activity outlined through groups aligned to the Strategic and Tactical Equality Diversity and Inclusion Boards (SEDIB/ TEDIB).

24. Environmental

None.

25. Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

Staff with the right skills, behaviours and attitude to provide an excellent service.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 - AFSA and Capsticks – Diversity and positive Action Briefing note for Fire and Rescue Services

Officers to Contact

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