

**Status of Report: Public**

**Meeting: Combined Fire Authority**

**Date: 16 June 2021**

**Subject: Whole-time Recruitment**

**Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer**

**Author: Georgina Coop, Area Manager People and Organisational Development**

**For: Decision**

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the strategy to recruit firefighters to meet the needs of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) up to the end of 2022/23.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the Combined Fire Authority:
  - a. Approves the Firefighter recruitment strategy for 2021/22 and 2022/23 (set out in paragraphs 14-17);
  - b. Notes that analysis shows that the selection methods used in the recent recruitment campaign have not negatively impacted on diversity statistics, and particularly the increased success of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic applicants in progressing through the recruitment process.

### **Executive Summary**

3. This report sets a summary of the most recent Whole-time recruitment process, which started in November 2020 with total of 370 applications and finished with the appointment of 23 firefighters in July 2021. This was made up of 16 external recruits, three transferees and four On-Call migrations.
4. The report summarises current planning assumptions in relation to workforce planning and provides an overview of the current position for operational firefighters up to end of 2022/23.

### **Background**

5. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's purpose is to create safer people and safer places. We do this by providing an emergency response service to over one million people across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year. In order to fulfil its statutory duty, the Service requires a workforce of 348 operational firefighters, this is referred to as the 'establishment figure'.

6. Through attrition this figure reduces over time and workforce planning activities are designed to predict for potential leavers in order to recruit and train the necessary number of new recruits in time to maintain the required establishment figure.
7. The recruitment strategy of the Service links to its commitment to have a workforce that reflects the communities served and new recruits are recruited from within the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area only.

#### Summary of the latest recruitment campaign.

8. Data on diversity, media effectiveness and the origin of candidate (external, migration or transferees) was recorded at each stage of the campaign.
9. Key points to note are:
  - a. The percentage of Black, Ethnic, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates at application was 17%, which increased to 23% at the point of joining the Service.
  - b. Gender diversity figures remained consistent. The percentage of male candidates at application and at the point of joining was 87%.
10. A full breakdown of the recruitment campaign is attached at the Appendix to this report. The data recorded suggests that the campaign did not adversely impact any applicants from underrepresented groups.
11. 14 of the 23 recruits commenced their training under the apprenticeship scheme at the Fire Service College on 10 May. The apprenticeship scheme requires certain criteria to be satisfied, resulting in some trainees not being subject to this approach.

#### Covid-19

12. The activities that are usually undertaken during the recruitment process were amended to take into account the various Covid-19 restrictions that were in place at the time. E-workshops were delivered enabling potential candidates to gain access to recruitment, fitness and nutritional information to support them in their application. The positive action "Have a Go" events that focus on enabling underrepresented groups to experience the practical recruitment test continued. These commenced prior to the opening of the recruitment campaign, however there were less events and the numbers able to participate were reduced. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in covid secure environments as senior managers felt this element of the campaign was critical to do in person.

#### Review of the Recruitment Campaign

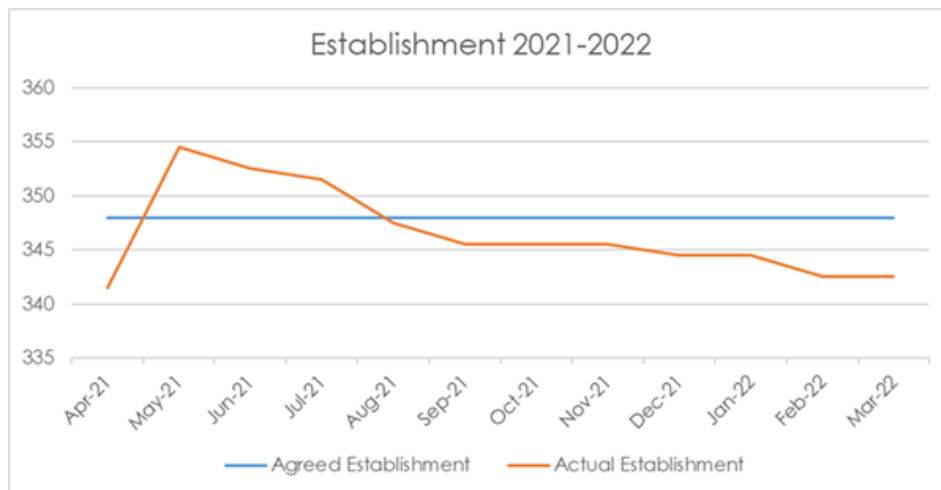
13. Internal departments involved in the recent campaign have reviewed activities to identify areas for improvement in future recruitment drives. This

demonstrates the Service's ambition to continue to develop and improve recruitment activity. The outcomes suggest improvements can be achieved by:

- a. Planning and prioritising positive action activities as Covid-19 restrictions ease;
- b. Exploring the opportunity to offer online competency framework testing as an alternative to written applications;
- c. Providing interview and feedback training for all assessors; and
- d. Considering the use of community members on interview panels.

#### Recruitment Strategy 2021/22 and 2022/23

14. As at 1 May 2021, the actual establishment is 334.5, A further six people will leave before 30 June 2021 and there are 11 retirements predicted up to 31 March 2022. If these expectations materialise and all the recruits are successful in their training, the establishment figure at the end of March 2022 will be 340.5 (7.5 below the establishment figure).



15. Additionally, ceasing the use of the Day Crewing Plus (DCP) duty system, following the Combined Fire Authority's decision at its meeting on 29 July 2020 to move away from DCP, is likely to present a need to increase the current establishment in line with any new duty system agreed by the Combined Fire Authority.
16. Based on the current establishment assumptions and potential adjustments as a result of any new duty systems that replace DCP, a recruitment campaign will commence in July 2021 with the plan to appoint up to 30 new recruits in 2022. At this stage, it is proposed that the approach which includes a blend (described below) of external recruits, On-Call migrations and transfers be continued. This is dependent on the numbers and balance of successful applications.
17. Blended recruitment enables the Service to benefit from candidates with prior knowledge and experience whilst also facilitating the training of new recruits. This blended approach consists of:

- 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 the 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; and
- c. A whole-time full recruitment process.

### **Report Implications/Impact**

#### 18. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, Part 2, section 7, paragraphs 1 and 2, places a requirement on Fire Authorities to make suitable provision for Fire and Rescue Services, including staffing and training of staff to respond to emergency incidents.

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.

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

There is a financial cost associated with running a recruitment campaign. This will include potential marketing costs, staffing costs and funding on-line assessment methods. However, making the required investment in order to run a high-quality campaign will represent value for money as we aim to attract a pool of appointable candidates who will fulfil the Service's recruitment needs for two intakes.

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

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

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

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

- b. Equality Impact Assessments have been completed in the separate stages of recruitment and any issues identified were addressed.

22. Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

23. Impact upon “Our Plan” Objectives

The recruitment of staff across the Service is key to us delivering the highest levels of response. By recruiting high quality, talented and motivated staff we will not only meet the operational requirements but also improve prevention, protection and engagement with the community. This is covered in Our plan and specifically contributes to Response and people elements.

## **Appendix**

Recruitment data from latest Whole-time campaign

### **Officers to Contact**

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