

**Status of Report:** Public

**Meeting:** Combined Fire Authority

**Date:** 9 February 2022

**Subject:** Firefighter Apprenticeship Delivery

**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 inform the Combined Fire Authority of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's intention to establish the necessary systems and processes required to deliver the Firefighter Apprenticeship scheme internally, with effect from August 2022. The report details the proposed changes to the delivery model of the Firefighter apprenticeship for all new recruits joining Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the Combined Fire Authority approves that the Service takes the action required to become an employer provider of the Firefighter Apprenticeship.

### **Executive Summary**

3. In 2018, the Institute for Apprenticeships introduced the Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard for the training and assessment of new recruit Firefighters.
4. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) currently uses the Fire Service College (FSC), as an external provider, to deliver the Firefighter Apprenticeship to new recruits.
5. It is proposed that the Service takes the action required to become an employer provider of the Firefighter Apprenticeship and moves away from using the FSC. This will ensure the initial training is delivered using LFRS methods and allow the service to provide more reliable, more regular, more flexible on-the-job support to the learners.
6. In addition, it is anticipated that the cost of delivering the apprenticeship will be equivalent to the amount that can be gained from the apprenticeship levy.

However, there will be a cost saving of £4,000 per recruit as a result of not attending a residential course at FSC (explained in paragraph 14). This averages £80,000 a year.

## **Background**

### Firefighter Apprenticeships

7. Apprentices are aged 16 or over and combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. Apprenticeships must last for at least a year but can last up to five years depending on the level at which the apprentice is studying. It is possible to receive help from the government to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment as an incentive payment for other costs.
8. In 2018, the Institute for Apprenticeships introduced the Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard which is a Level 3 apprenticeship, delivered over two years. The government funding from the Apprenticeship service was originally set at £12,000 and was recently increased to £14,000.
9. Of that £14,000, £11,200\* is for the delivery of the apprenticeship and £2,800 is for the end point assessment, which is completed by an alternative training provider.
10. An apprenticeship can be offered by an employer in one of the following ways;
  - i. Main provider – which has been set up on the Register of Approved Training Providers (ROATP) and subject to OFSTED assessments. These can deliver apprenticeships for internal (their own employees) and external customers (employees from other organisations)
  - ii. Employer provider – who has been set up on the Register of Approved Training Providers (ROATP) and subject to OFSTED assessments. These can deliver apprenticeships for internal customers (their own employees) only.
  - iii. Sub-contracted training provider – Works for a main provider to deliver some of the elements of training. The apprenticeship is run by a main provider.
  - iv. External provider – Apprentices work for the organisation but the apprenticeship programme is delivered by an external provider.

### Current situation

11. In 2020, LFRS engaged with the FSC to deliver the apprenticeship to new recruits (qualifying criteria permitting - Appendix 1) as an external provider. LFRS uses the FSC to deliver the apprenticeship as there are few other providers that offer the model that suits the needs of LFRS.
12. The current apprenticeship programme consists of

- i. Eight weeks' residential Firefighter development programme (FFDP), delivered at FSC at Moreton-in-the-Marsh.
  - ii. Three weeks' conversion training, delivered at Loughborough training centre.
  - iii. Once the recruits have completed their eleven weeks, they join a station and complete the remainder of the 24-month apprenticeship programme. During this time, the apprentice is supported by their line manager and a talent coach (employed by the FSC) in order to complete the necessary training and record evidence onto the Learner Management System administered by the FSC.
13. The FSC draws down the £11,200\* from the LFRS levy for each apprentice.
  14. A part of the Apprenticeship programme includes the delivery of the eight-week Firefighter development programme (basic training) and the Service also pays an additional £4,000 top up to cover accommodation costs.
  15. Due to the distance between the residential training facility and Leicester (approximately 60 miles), the Service is limited in its flexibility to provide additional support to the recruits when required.
  16. As outlined above, the recruits also have to undertake an additional three weeks' conversion training in order to familiarise themselves with the services equipment and to provide them with additional skills in the required areas (for example water rescue).
  17. The FSC also provides the apprentices with on the job support in the form of a talent coach. As this service is provided by an external provider, there is limited flexibility and no opportunity to add extra support where required.

### Recruit numbers

18. It is anticipated that 13 new recruits will join LFRS in the second half of 2022. The Service predicts that it will need to recruit 20 people in 2023 and 16 people in 2024 to cover anticipated retirements<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this recruitment, the change of the duty system away from day crewing plus will require a minimum of an extra 24 firefighters.
19. This total represents an investment of £817,600 available to fund the training and assessment of the firefighter apprenticeships in 2022, 2023 and 2024.
20. Additionally, whilst the Service continues to use the FSC for the delivery of the apprenticeship scheme, there is an additional cost of £4000 (payable directly to

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<sup>1</sup> This figure does not take in to account people who are currently eligible to retire but have chosen not to. These figures are based on predicted retirement dates.

the FSC) to fund the accommodation costs. For the numbers outlined above this totals £292,000 for 2022, 2023 and 2024.

### Benefits

21. The initial training (FFDP) can be delivered using LFRS methods and equipment thus negating the need to 'retrain' when the recruits return from the FSC.
22. The Service's instructors will be able to build relationships with the recruits from the day they start, through their basic training, and can highlight any additional development needs.
23. The Service's learner management system (Oracle) can be used to record evidence. Currently, evidence needs to be recorded by the recruits onto two systems so this is more efficient.
24. The apprenticeship funding will allow the service to provide more reliable, more regular, more flexible on-the-job support to the learners, delivered by a talent coach.
25. The programme will be mainly non-residential, which means that the recruits do not have to live away from home for eight weeks. This has a positive impact on any recruits who have caring responsibilities whilst also saving the Service £4,000 per recruit.

### Next steps.

26. Initial research has included an exploration of;
  - i. The potential funding that can be generated by delivering the apprenticeship.
  - ii. The potential costs associated with delivering the apprenticeship as an employer provider which include
    - Employing additional (temporary green book) staff to support the delivery of the apprenticeship. This includes someone to lead the delivery of the programme, instructors, workplace coaches and people to complete assessment and verification.
    - The use of any external training venues, where the Service's own facilities cannot be used i.e. fires in basements.
  - iii. Visits have taken place to both Hertfordshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's in order to support the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of each of the delivery options.

- iv. A basic assessment of the infrastructure required to provide the apprenticeship as an employer provider measured against the current state.
27. Further work that needs to be completed includes
- i. A full assessment of the infrastructure required (and costs of) to provide the apprenticeship as an employer provider measured against the current state.
  - ii. A comprehensive list of all the tasks and actions required to move from current position to 'go-live' of firefighter apprenticeship.
  - iii. Management of these tasks against the required timeline.
28. In order to complete the high level actions outlined in section 28, the position of Apprenticeship Co-ordinator will be recruited (by the end of January).

### **Report Implications/Impact**

29. Legal (including crime and disorder)

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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

Adopting this delivery model represents better value for money because the levy funds will cover all the costs associated with the delivery of the apprenticeship and can be spent in a way that best suits the needs of LFRS.

Additionally, FSC currently charges an additional £4000 top up (for accommodation). This charge will be greatly reduced as the recruits will not be required to complete an eight-week residential course.

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

The new recruit firefighters will be working locally with the learning and development department for the duration of FFDP. It is anticipated that they will be available to provide operational cover sooner than the existing 11 weeks.

There is a risk that current state of the job market means that the Service is unable to recruit an individual with the required knowledge and experience. This will impact on the delivery of this project against the required timelines.

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

Feedback from the recruits who attended FSC suggests that employees prefer an in-house FFDP. It is suggested that a more joined up approach to the

delivery of basic training (e.g. using one system to record evidence) would be well received by the workforce.

The programme will be non-residential and means that the recruits do not have to live away from home for eight weeks. This will have a positive impact on any new recruits with caring responsibilities.

33. Environmental

The recruits will be receiving the majority of their training from within their local areas so reducing the impact of travelling to and from the FSC (Moreton-in-the-Marsh).

34. Impact upon "Our Plan" Objectives

Response - Be ready to respond to emergency incidents - Appliances available to respond with competent staff

Finance - listen to the ideas of our workforce and deliver innovative solutions that benefits service delivery, the environment, our workforce, or realises efficiencies

People - provide a blended range of training resources that support the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours for growth in role as well as promotion

**Background Papers**

None

**Appendices**

None.

**Officers to Contact**

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