

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 12 December 2018

Subject: Firefighter Recruitment

Report by: Rick Taylor, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Information Only

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to 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 content of this report.

Executive Summary

3. This report updates the CFA on firefighter recruitment activity
 - Over the next 3 years (up to March 2021) there will be a potential of 34.5 vacancies, 10% of the agreed establishment. This is using planning assumptions based upon predicted retirements constructed around age versus years served.
 - Recruitment of 34 new individuals over a 3-year period places an increased burden on Learning and Development (L&D), as well as a number of full competence issues, which may cause an immediate operational shortfall.
 - A 'blended' approach was approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in September 2018. It is designed to address the short and medium term needs of the service. This will reduce the burden on L&D and satisfy immediate operational requirements.
4. The Corporate Governance Committee considered a report on Firefighter recruitment at its meeting on 21 November 2018. The Committee noted the report and requested a further update at a future meeting.

Background

5. Recruitment – Wholetime

- i. A workforce plan for recruitment (operational staff) up to 2020 is now in place. This work was reviewed and approved by SMT as a resourcing plan on 24 September 2018.
- ii. This outlined a blended recruitment sourcing approach for a total of 34 firefighters up to 2020, including transfers (exact mix and number to be determined).
- iii. This blended sourcing approach will reduce the burden on L&D and satisfy immediate operational requirements and will include:
 - a. Recruitment via transfers from other services - this provides a short lead time to have fully competent fire fighters placed in roles without delay.
 - 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.
 - c. Whole time full recruitment process
- iv. By adopting this approach, by March 2021 the 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).
- v. The service will also look to access Fire Fighter apprenticeships for new recruits following initial feedback from early adopters. Funding of £170,000 per annum was approved in 2017/18 budget. The scheme has not progressed due to delays in the implementation of the apprentice firefighter framework. The framework has now been agreed and LFRS are working towards becoming an employer provider accredited to the Skills For Justice and OFSTED compliant.
- vi. The following applications for transfers have been received:

Firefighter = 12, Crew Manager = 3, Watch Manager = 3. The recruitment process for these transferees is underway.
- vii. The number of migrations from On-Call/Fixed Term Contract options and Wholetime recruitment will be determined by the outcomes of both the transfer and Wholetime recruitment processes.
- viii. Recruitment for Wholetime firefighters in 2018 opened on 10 October 2018; 354 completed applications were received. 346 have progressed to the shortlisting stage. 8 were rejected as they did not live in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland.

Equalities Information

Of the 346 progressed and completed applications:

- 83% (286) of applicants were male
- 16% (56) of applicants were female
- Less than 1% (3) of applicants preferred not to say
- Less than 1% (1) of applicants were transgender

Male Applicants:

- 84% (240) White British
- 15% (43) Other ethnic background
- Less than 1% (3) Preferred not to say

Female Applicants:

- 87% (49) White British
- 13% (7) Other ethnic background

Other Applicants (Preferred not to say and transgender)

- 100% (1) Transgender applicant is White British
- 100% (3) Preferred not to say (gender) also preferred not to say ethnicity

Disability Noted:

- 19 Male applicants
- 4 Female applicants
- 0 Other applicants

This data is reflective of the percentage breakdown from the 2017 Wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign.

Timetable:

- Invites for job related testing following shortlisting were sent week commencing 12 November 2018
- Testing will take place week commencing 26 November 2018
- Interviews will take place week commencing 10 December 2018
- Conditional offers of appointment to be advised to candidates week commencing 7 January 2019
- Induction week commencing 1 April 2019

- Training week commencing 8 April 2019
- New recruits on station week commencing 3 June 2019

6. Recruitment – On-Call

Recruitment campaign (number 01/19) closed on 10 October 2018 with 19 new applications and 8 on hold from the previous campaign. Station interviews are currently being held.

7. Recruitment – Watch Managers

The pool is due to be refreshed in January 2019. Temporary appointments are being utilised for cover as development opportunities for staff.

8. **Report Implications/Impact**

8.1 Legal (including crime and disorder)

None.

8.2 Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

Recruitment budget is £30,000.

8.3 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 Integrated Risk Management Plan improvement projects.

8.4 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 are taking place.

8.5 Environmental

None.

8.6 Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

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

9. Background Papers

None.

10. Appendices

None.

11. Officers to Contact

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