

CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MEETING OF: STAFFING COMMITTEE
DATE: 9 NOVEMBER 2022
REPORT OF: HEAD OF SERVICE DELIVERY
AUTHOR: GM AARON COLLIS / LAURA TURNER

SUBJECT: ANNUAL WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update as of 24th October 2022 of the current operational staffing levels and give Members an overview of the workforce planning process which is used to plan and recruit the required number of Firefighters.

Recommended: That Members:

- [1] Note the contents of the update.

Background

2. The Service currently has a total funded establishment of 400 “Grey Book” employees. This includes staff across a range of departments.
3. Based on the retirement profile and our workforce planning assumptions, the establishment forecast predicts that the Service will have been over-established by 6.75 FTE throughout the financial year up to 31st March 2023. This over establishment assists the Service by adding some resilience and allows for some temporary posts which are not included within the funded establishment (e.g., the Area Manager – Head of Service Improvement role).
4. During the last year the Service has entered a period of significant change due to the number of retirements which represents a higher than usual turnover of staff. This will present additional challenges to the Service in the coming years.
5. Analysis by the Pensions Manager has provided detailed retirement assumptions which are used to inform workforce planning. However, some uncertainty exists, as individuals may not retire at the anticipated date due to their personal circumstances. The continued lack of clarity around the McCloud pension ruling is also likely to impact on people’s choices.
6. The Service is also seeing an increased number of leavers to both external employers and other fire and rescue services who are facing similar issues with their retirement profiles. In the four-year period to 31st March 2026, we are anticipating approximately 141 leavers, which represents employee turnover of 37%.

7. In response to this, officers have developed a detailed medium term workforce model which forecasts our recruitment and training requirements up to March 2026. Progress against this is closely monitored in monthly establishment meetings which ensure that recruitment against operational requirements continues to meet business need. An overview chart of the four-year recruitment plan is provided within Appendix A.

Information

New Starters

7. In the last 12 months the Service has undertaken the following recruitment to wholetime firefighter roles:

- 12 Community Safety Apprentices (Jan-22)*
- 13 Inter-Service Transfer and On Call Migration (Mar-22)
- 13 Wholetime Recruits (Apr-22)
- 11 Inter-Service Transfer and On Call Migration (Sep-22)
- 13 Wholetime Recruits (Sep-22)

Total 62 new recruits.

*These staff will begin as wholetime firefighters upon the completion of a 16 week recruit course at the conclusion of their apprenticeship programme in March 2023.

Leavers

8. In the last 12 months from 1st October 2021 to 30th September 2022 the Service has seen the following staff leave:

- Retirements – 21
- Transfer to other FRS – 11
- Resignation – 5
- Dismissal – 2

Total 39 leavers.

Future Recruitment

9. Future recruitment and training is planned to fill the following courses:

- 8 Inter-Service Transfer and On Call Migration (Feb-23)
- 12 Wholetime Recruits (Sep-23)
- 12 Community Safety Apprentices (Oct-23)
- 6 Inter-Service Transfer and On Call Migration (Feb-24)
- 13 Wholetime Recruits (Apr-24)
- 12 Wholetime Recruits (Sep-24)
- 6 Inter-Service Transfer and On Call Migration (Feb-25)
- 12 Wholetime Recruits (Sep-25)

The above, combined with those already listed in paragraph 7, provide a total of 143 new entrants, meeting the need for the estimated 141 leavers over the same period up to 31st March 2026. The new entrants will provide a blend of development firefighters who will all complete a full 16 week recruit course, existing internal and external On Call firefighters and competent firefighters who are transferring from other Services who will attend bespoke conversion courses of a shorter duration.

Promotion Board Processes

10. The Service continues to conduct annual promotion boards in order to fill the required number of supervisory and managerial roles. The latest round of promotion boards for Crew, Watch and Station Managers were completed in October 2022. This resulted in the following permanent appointments:

10 permanent Station Manager appointments
16 permanent Watch Manager appointments
17 permanent Crew Manager appointments
11. By completing the promotion boards on a structured annual basis, the Service is able to reduce the number of temporary promotions which increases stability within management teams and promotes improved employee engagement and welfare.
12. The number of temporary promotions is one measure which is considered by HMICFRS as part of its inspection process. Following the conclusion of the latest 2022 promotion boards, the Service is expected to have 10 staff (at Station Manager level and below) in temporary promotion posts by 1st January 2023.

CRMP 2024-2028 / Fire Cover Review

13. The new workforce planning model which has been developed by officers can be easily adapted as the emerging findings from the Fire Cover Review and future Service Delivery requirements are identified for inclusion in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-2028. This will allow officers to ensure the Service is well placed to adapt to any changing workforce requirements as they become clearer in the next 12 months, or so.

Financial Implications

14. To facilitate the recruitment plan effectively, the whole-time recruit training courses must be completed with a minimum of 12 recruits. The nature of this type of bulk recruitment means that the plan cannot be fully aligned to having the exact number of FTE required at any given time. As a result, the Service will, on average, across the period, employ approximately 6.75 FTE above the funded establishment during 2022/23. This will represent an additional cost of approximately £303k.

Legal implications

15. There are no legal implications associated with the information contained within this report.

Equality & Diversity Implications

16. Officers have established a dedicated Attraction and Recruitment Group which meets monthly and considers positive action requirements in detail to ensure inclusion within all recruitment processes. Several ongoing initiatives to promote recruitment within underrepresented groups are in place, including arrangements to maintain contact with those unsuccessful in previous processes and provide support in preparation for future recruitment processes.
17. Further work to review the eligibility and entry requirements for external applicants when applying for vacancies and transfers is ongoing. This is in direct response to the loss of staff to other Services and to address the need to diversify our workforce further.

Environmental Implications

18. There are no environmental implications associated with the information contained within this report.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, CLEMONDS HEY, WINSFORD
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

**STAFFING COMMITTEE ON 8TH NOVEMBER 2021 – ITEM 3 – WORKFORCE
PLANNING UPDATE**