

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: BRIGADE MANAGERS' PAY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE
DATE: 16 JANUARY 2019
REPORT OF: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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SUBJECT: BRIGADE MANAGER STRUCTURE PILOT

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides information about the pilot of the temporary brigade manager structure and seeks Members support for the introduction of a new brigade manager structure which will increase the resilience, capacity and visibility of senior officers.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Recommend the new brigade manager structure to the Fire Authority as shown at Fig 1, paragraph 8.
- [2] Note, subject to the approval of the new brigade manager structure by the Fire Authority, the proposed selection process for the permanent recruitment of two Assistant Chief Fire Officers as outlined at paragraphs 14 and 15.

Background

2. Over the course of the last decade there have been a number of brigade management structures that have been in operation within Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. These are summarised in the table below:

Year	Chief Fire Officer	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
2007	1	3* * Included non operational director post	
2009	1	2	
2010	1	1	1
2016	1	1	

3. As can be seen in the table the Service halved the brigade manager establishment from 4 to 2. The most recent reduction was made in 2016 when an Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) post was deleted after the post holder retired. This was necessary due to ongoing austerity, budget cuts and the need to demonstrate value for money. Although the elimination of the ACFO post generated tangible savings, with only two brigade managers remaining, this created a potential risk that such a lean structure could impact on operational resilience. There was also a question-mark about whether it would be sustainable in the long term.
4. Despite this, up until earlier this year when Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive (CFO) Paul Hancock retired, both the CFO and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) demonstrated the ability to manage their increased workloads and as a result the reduced brigade manager structure did not falter nor put the Service at risk. The critical success factor was a highly effective and cooperative working relationship between the CFO and DCFO that had been established over a nine year period of working together as experienced brigade managers within Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.
5. The increased workloads and competing demands on their time have, however, inadvertently created a disconnect between the brigade managers and the staff. Staff survey results have highlighted the need for the brigade managers to be seen across the organisation as visible and accessible and both direct and indirect staff feedback has amplified this as critical factor in strengthening organisational culture, developing staff engagement and improving morale.

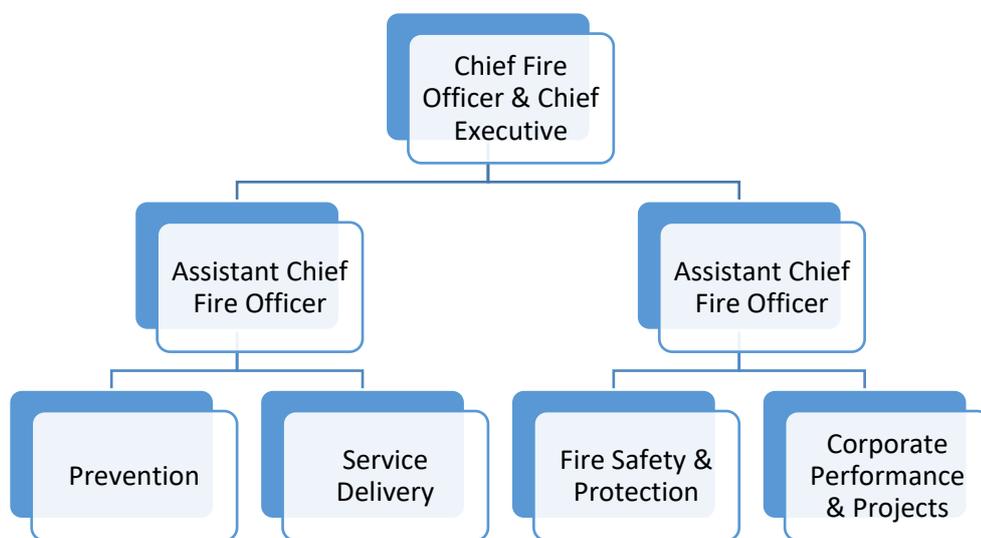
Information

6. In recognition of the need to have a sustainable brigade manager structure with sufficient capacity to lead effectively whilst supporting the initial development and settling in of a new CFO, the Fire Authority agreed to pilot a revised brigade manager structure for a period of six months.
7. To support the pilot an internal recruitment process was undertaken and two substantive Area Managers were appointed into two temporary ACFO posts for the duration of the pilot which ran from 1 July – 31 December 2018. No one was designated as DCFO during this period.
8. The temporary structure shown in the diagram on the next page was designed around a number of important principles.
 - It was recognised that the portfolio of the DCFO post was disproportionate, with responsibility for all of the Service's directorates with the exception of Corporate Communications and Business Intelligence. The new structure required the apportionment of the responsibilities between the two ACFO posts to be appropriately

focused, realistic and sustainable with no more than four direct reports each.

- The new structure also considered the need for maintaining a sustainable out-of-hours rota for gold command and operational resilience whilst also ensuring that the brigade managers could achieve an appropriate work-life balance.
- Of significant importance was the need to create roles that had sufficient capacity to enable brigade managers to drive positive cultural change through more direct engagement with staff and more effective, timely and frequent communications.

Fig 1.0 – Structure – 6 month pilot



9. At the point of evaluation it is clear that the new structure has fulfilled the design principles and has seen a significant improvement in the ability of the brigade managers to apply sufficient time and focus to their areas of responsibility. One to ones and communication with direct reports have been more frequent and the introduction of two ACFOs has allowed the CFO to step away from the day to day business in order to focus more on the strategic, political and partnership aspects of his new role.
10. The new structure has also enabled significant progress to be made in addressing the challenge and stated problem of staff engagement, visibility and accessibility. The table below illustrates the improved visibility and engagement with staff over the six month trial period compared with the same period during 2017 under the previous brigade manager structure. It is the intention of the CFO to maintain a published list of brigade manager visits to fire stations to ensure that staff engagement and visibility of senior officers remains a key priority and that the significant increase is maintained from year to year.

July 1 st – 31 st December	Number of Visits to Staff Groups/Watches	Number of Brigade Managers
2017	17	2
2018	75	3

11. As part of the evaluation of the pilot and prior to submitting the structure to Members as a formal recommendation, wider research was also carried to understand and compare the brigade management structures within other fire and rescue services. A summary of this research which was conducted by an independent HR consultant is covered in Appendix A to this report.
12. In respect of the national comparisons it is worthy of note that there is an increasing trend across the sector for services to revert back to having two ACFO posts within their brigade manager structures. This pattern also includes some services who have reverted back from the previous trend of having non operational director level posts in their brigade manager structures, to re-establish operational ACFO roles. This is particularly noticeable where new CFOs have been appointed and are seeking the necessary support and operational resilience.

Recommendations

13. Based on an evaluation of the pilot and a realisation of the benefits and improvements that can be expected with the proposed new structure, it is recommended that the structure outlined at fig 1.0 is recommended by Members to the Fire Authority.
14. Subject to this structure being approved, a national recruitment campaign would be required and could begin in late February inviting both internal and external applications. The first stage of the selection process would comprise of a technical interview, a behavioural interview, a psychometric assessment and a media assessment. As has been done in the past for senior appointments the make up of the assessment panels would include independent assessors from outside of the Service.
15. The second stage of the selection process would comprise of an interview and presentation to be assessed by Members of the Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee. The selection process could be completed by the first week in April 2018 and subject to potential notice periods, it is anticipated that the posts could be filled by May/June 2019.

Financial Implications

16. In developing this proposal consideration was given to the following financial impacts:
 - Difference in the salary of the previous CFO and the current CFO
 - Savings associated with the deletion of the DCFO post

- Additional savings associated with the deletion of a Group Manager B post within the Transformation Team
17. A breakdown of costs comparing the proposed structure with the cost of the previous structure is contained in Appendix B to this report. As can be seen the total additional cost of the new structure, including employer costs, is £8,401. This is being funded from reserves in this financial year and would need to be built into the base budget in subsequent years.

Legal Implications

18. There are no direct legal implications associated with this proposal other than ensuring that the recruitment and selection process adheres to employment law and best practice.
19. The Fire Authority's Constitution does not specifically require the Authority to approve a decision like this. However, officers believe that such a decision might be considered to be a key decision that merits the involvement of all Members.
20. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 includes a requirement at paragraph 6.10 concerned with the filling of certain posts. It states: To ensure greater fairness and the exchange of talent and ideas, all principal officer posts must be open to competition nationally, and fire and rescue authorities must take account of this in their workforce planning.

Equality and Diversity Implications

21. By advertising these posts externally and using independent assessors we are demonstrating our commitment to equality and inclusion and the Equality and Diversity Officer will be undertaking an equality impact assessment on the proposed selection process.

Environmental Implications

22. Technology will be utilised as far as is practicable to ensure that the recruitment process and associated documentation supports the organisation's commitment to reducing environmental costs and the carbon footprint.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE