

CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MEETING OF: STAFFING COMMITTEE
DATE: 16TH NOVEMBER 2020
REPORT OF: HEAD OF SERVICE DELIVERY
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SUBJECT: WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update in respect of the current and predicted operational establishment levels for the remainder of the financial year 2020/21 and provide recommendations for 2021/22 establishment levels.
2. The report will also provide an update in respect of the number of personnel that are in development or FF3,4,5 (operationally competent).
3. The report will also provide an update in respect of the number of personnel in temporary positions and temporary promotions.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Note the Workforce Planning Update;
- [2] Note the recommendations approved by The Service Management Team (SMT) contained in paragraph/s 14, 15 and 16.

Background

4. The workforce planning proposals previously agreed by SMT in the March 2020 paper were to complete the introduction of the 5 remaining firefighter migrations and to utilise firefighter migration/inter brigade transfer and delay the commencement of the wholetime recruitment campaign to a later start date than April 2021.
5. The firefighter migrations have been completed and the need for any further migration/inter brigade transfers are regularly reviewed by the establishments group together with the need for a wholetime recruits course.
6. Starters
 - 6.1 There have been 5 new starters through migration in Q1.

7. Leavers

7.1 There have been 9 leavers in 2020/21 to date:

- 6 retirements have occurred. 4 planned retirements, (5 less than predicted for the year to date), plus 1 deferred retirement from 2019/20 and 1 further early retirement.
- 3 other leavers' have occurred against a planning assumption of 10 for the year.

8. Predicted Leavers for the remainder of 2020/21

8.1 7 further individuals eligible for retirement;

8.2 7 'other leavers' as per agreed planning assumption.

9. Known Recruitment Assumptions

9.1 There is no further planned recruitment in 2020/21.

The following are known recruitment assumptions for the year 2021/2022:

- Of the 11 'Cohort Three' apprentices 10 are expected to go live in Q1 2021/22
- 1 High Potential Development Student

10. Development Firefighters

10.1 The firefighter role map has a number of units which reflect the diverse role of a firefighter. Units 3, 4 and 5 all relate to fire service operations: Unit 3 - Save and preserve endangered life. Unit 4 - Resolve fire and rescue operational incidents. Unit 5 - Protect the environment from the effects of hazardous materials. In 2018 the Staffing Committee approved that on completion of these 3 units, development firefighters can have the restrictions listed in pillar 3 of the Service Development to Competent Guidance lifted, now being deemed operationally competent for the purposes of workforce planning.

10.2 We currently have in Service the following number of development and FF3,4,5 Firefighters in post:

- 17 development firefighters (currently do not hold units FF3,4,5);
- 6 development firefighters who hold FF3,4,5 (operationally competent)

10.3 Appendix 1 provides the latest Gant chart of actual and predicted FF3,4,5 achievement for our development firefighters.

10.4 Excluding DC1 stations, 50 is the maximum number of operational development firefighters the Service can accommodate on the premise of one

development firefighter per watch on one-pump stations and two development Firefighters per watch on two-pump stations.

11. Planning Assumptions

- 11.1 Planning assumptions remain the same as previous workforce planning updates. It is acknowledged that IRMP proposals will see Chester's 2nd appliance return to Chester and Ellesmere Port's 2nd appliance move to Powey Lane which will change establishment levels at those individual stations but not the overall establishment levels. These changes are due to take place when Chester Fire Station is ready for occupation early in 2021 and will be reflected in the March 2021 update paper to Service Management Team.
- 11.2 As previously reported the recent pension ruling could have an impact on how the retirement forecasting is predicted, potentially changing planning assumptions going forward.
- 11.3 On 16th July 2020 HM Treasury and MHCLG published consultations to remedy the age discrimination in schemes. In a written statement the Chief Secretary to the Treasury confirmed that the remedies proposed in the consultations will apply equally to claimants and non-claimants. The consultations run until October 2020 after which the nature and timing of the primary legislation necessary to bring forward changes to the schemes will be developed. It is government's intention for legislation to be in place by April 2022. The consultations propose that remedies will be backdated to the commencement of existing protections in April 2015. However, until further guidance is provided, current planning assumptions continue to be used.
- 11.4 The Joint Corporate Services pension Lead has been re-advertised, however a dedicated Fire Pensions Co-ordinator post within the payroll and pensions team was approved and has now been appointed to.
- 11.5 It is also possible that the departmental reviews of Operational Policy and Assurance (OPA), Protection and Prevention may alter the departmental establishment levels which may have an impact on the Service Delivery establishments should temporary posted individuals return. However, it has been agreed by the Head of Department that for the Operational Training Group (OTG) element of the OPA review that substantive appointments to the minimum staffing levels within OTG can be made following the 2020 Watch Manager Promotion Board, which would inevitably see the number of temporary promotion and postings reduce.
- 11.6 The Service has used migrations as a flexible approach to recruitment over the last 2-3 years. However, it is recognised that although this approach provides a short lead-in time in order to react to a rapid change in establishment numbers, it does create greater impact on the On Call Duty System by creating dual role firefighters who typically have shorter On Call contracts and often take compensatory rest. Therefore, a blended approach of migration and inter brigade transfers would mitigate some of the impact. Additionally the inter brigade transfers would bring greater opportunity for diversification.

11.7 The Establishments Group is also aware that the review of the duty system at Wilmslow may result in a number of staff needing to be redeployed within the Service, albeit the review is not due to be concluded until 2023/2024.

12. Summary of Establishments

12.1 Taking into account temporary movements on and off the wholetime duty shifts system, in summary the predicted establishment level for the end of 2020/21 is 335 which is 4 over the funded posts and which is predicated on those 7 further 'other leavers' coming to fruition and 5 of the 7 remaining retirements going ahead.

12.2 It is noted that throughout the current and next financial year, individuals who are in long-term temporary promotions or posts, who do not have substantive positions, may return and therefore increase the Service Delivery establishment levels. For example, the On Call Support Officer Roles and those individuals who relinquished their substantive posts to enable those in the Crew Manager Talent Pool to secure substantive positions.

13. Temporary Posts and Promotions

13.1 In order to give an overview of the number of individuals who are in temporary posts and/or promotions Appendix 2 has been produced. This number has an impact on managing establishment levels and recommendations for future recruitment.

13.2 Although this report focusses primarily on Service Delivery establishment levels, the table includes temporary postings across all departments as these postings have both indirect and direct impacts on Service Delivery postings.

13.3 The establishment team continues to monitor those individuals who are in both temporary posts and promotions. Highlighting length of time in both post and time in development. This information is periodically shared with Heads of Department. Further detail can be provided to the wider SMT if required.

13.4 The Establishment team continues to make concerted efforts to ensure that not only are individuals given a substantive posting but also that it is at a preferred location. This continues to be an important piece of work that attempts to be inclusive of local Station Commander intelligence and in the spirit of our staff engagement activity.

Recommendations

14. For the remainder of 2020/21 retain the flexibility to introduce further firefighter migrations/inter brigade transfers into the Service. This will continue to provide a more flexible approach to the number of personnel we bring into the Service if planning assumptions are not accurate.

15. 12 firefighter migrations/inter brigade transfers in 2021/22 to be recruited. This will ensure the maintenance of enhanced establishment levels ahead of the potential for greater retirement/leaver numbers because of the change in pensions legislation due in April 2022.

16. A Wholetime Recruitment Campaign for 12 firefighters to be reviewed in March 2021.

Financial Implications

18. Based on the assumptions within this report and the recommendation to recruit and maintain adequate crewing levels there will be a predicted overspend against budget allocation. However, this overspend continues to be significantly reduced compared to the previous financial year.
19. The indicative maximum additional cost for 2020/21 has been calculated based on the planning and staffing assumptions and is as follows:

Total Cost of 4 additional staff above funded total - £176,000¹

Equality & Diversity Implications

20. The decision to further postpone 2020/21 recruitment will have an impact on our ability to improve equality and diversity in our workforce.
21. A Positive Action campaign will commence ahead of the recruitment campaign to mitigate any impact.

Environmental Implications

22. Sustained higher establishment levels has resulted in a reduction in vehicle movements for personnel undertaking pre-arranged additional shifts and Out Staffing. This has reduced the Service's impact on the environment.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE

¹ Note: Financial calculations are indicative based on the cost (+ on costs) of a firefighter @ £44,148¹ rounded to £44k (pay scale used 2020-21 inc 2% pay rise July 2020).