

CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MEETING OF: STAFFING COMMITTEE
DATE: 8 NOVEMBER 2021
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 (as at 14th September 2021) about the current and predicted operational "Grey Book" Wholetime levels for the remainder of the financial year 2021/22.
2. The report provides:
 - Information about how establishment levels will be maintained.
 - An update on the number of personnel that are in development or have achieved FF3, 4, and 5 (operationally competent).
 - An update on the number of temporary posts, and the temporary promotions that are required to backfill these posts.

Recommended: That Members:

- [1] Note the Workforce Planning Update

Background

3. Based on the retirement profile and workforce planning assumptions of the Service, the establishment forecast predicts that the Wholetime "Grey Book" duty system will be under established (6 posts) by the end of 2022/23 year if no further recruitment is undertaken.
4. In June 2021 the Service Management Team (SMT) agreed the commencement of a recruitment campaign for 12 Community Safety Apprentice Firefighters together with 1 High Potential Development Scheme firefighter (HPDS). Both recruitment processes have now started.
5. A further review of the establishments across the Service Delivery, Protection and Prevention, and Operational Policy and Assurance departments was undertaken between June and September 2021. The review found that we have started to experience a number of staff leavers over recent years that fall outside of our usual workforce planning assumptions (namely those staff with 30 years service and over 50 years old). There have also been a number of individuals leaving the Service for other reasons e.g. transferring to other services or leaving the fire and rescue sector altogether.

6. Based on pension changes that will come into force from April 2022, the potential exists for greater numbers of those staff with 25 years service in the 1992 pension scheme and aged over 50 years of age to retire.
7. Against this backdrop, SMT agreed in September 2021 to increase the “other leavers” in the workforce planning assumptions from 10 to 15 for 2022/23. It also agreed that 12 Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices should be recruited, who will be due to commence a course in April 2022.

Information

New Starters

8. The On Call to Wholetime firefighter migrations previously agreed in 2020-21 have now been completed and the 12 individuals have joined their watches on station in May 2021.
9. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer post was also filled in May 2021
10. There have been no other new starters

Leavers

11. There have been 13 leavers in 2021/22 to date:
 - 2 retirements
 - 1 ill health retirement
 - 10 other leavers
12. Therefore, we have already surpassed our planned assumption for 10 other leavers before the second quarter has ended.

Predicted Leavers for the remainder of 2021/22

13. 8 further individuals are also eligible for retirement – of which, 6 individuals have submitted their resignations, or provided a date for their retirement;
14. 3 individuals are currently eligible to retire who could have retired in previous years;
15. 1 more “other” leaver - a Wholetime Crew Manager will be transferring to another Fire and Rescue Service in Q3.

Known Recruitment Activity and Assumptions

16. The recruitment of 1 HPDS has already begun and the successful candidate will commence their training in January or April 2022* and be assigned to a station in Q1 or Q2 2022/23.
17. The recruitment of the next cohort of Firefighter and Community Safety apprentices has now commenced with a predicted date start of January 2022. The cohort are anticipated to be assigned to stations in Q2 2023/24.

18. The recruitment of a cohort of Wholetime Apprentice Firefighters will commence in November 2021 and they will start their initial training in April 2022 and be posted to station Q2 2022/23.

*This is dependent on the availability of recruit training courses

Firefighters In Development

19. We currently have the following firefighters in development (FFD) in post:
 - 15 FFD (who currently do not hold units FF3, 4 and 5 and are working towards operational competence);
 - 22 FFD who hold FF3,4 and 5 (deemed to be operationally competent and working towards full competence)
20. Appendix 1 provides the latest Gantt chart which details the actual and predicted achievement of FF3, 4 and 5 for our FFD.
21. The Service can accommodate 50 FFD as the maximum number that are operational at any one time. This is based on the premise of one FFD per watch on one-pump stations and two FFD per watch on two-pump stations.

Temporary Posts and Promotions

22. The number of individuals who are in temporary posts and/or promotions is detailed within Appendix 2. There are currently 69 temporary “Grey Book” postings across all departments which have an impact on managing establishment levels and recommendations for future recruitment.
23. The Establishment Team continues to monitor those individuals who are in both temporary posts and temporarily promoted, highlighting both the length of time in post and time in development.
24. The Establishment Team continues to make concerted efforts to ensure that not only are individuals given a substantive posting but, that it is at a preferred location. This is an important piece of work that attempts to address individual and departmental needs.

Future Workforce Planning Considerations

Retirements

25. The McCloud/Sargeant pension ruling could also have an impact on our “Grey Book” retirement forecasting, potentially changing planning assumptions going forward.
26. The retirement profile is currently predicated on a firefighter being eligible to retire after achieving 30 years service when reaching the age of 50 or over. This is a legacy from the majority of firefighters in the Service previously being members of the 1992 Firefighters Pension Scheme. Under this planning

assumption it is predicted that 66 staff will retire between 1st October 2021 and the 31st March 2026

27. However, this situation has changed with the introduction of other pension schemes such as the 2005 Firefighters Pension Scheme and since the McCloud/Sargeant ruling.
28. There is some evidence to show that experienced firefighters are now leaving the Service earlier than contemplated in these assumptions. All new firefighters are enrolled into a pension scheme, which is based on a retirement age of 60, not 50 as per the 1992 scheme. This may also change the tendency for firefighters to solely remain in the sector for their entire careers in the future.
29. The Establishments Team will be looking to the newly appointed CFRS dedicated Fire Pensions Manager to advise on what implications this might have for the current predicted retirement profile and identify the optimum point of retirements for each person. The team intend to utilise this intelligence to update planning assumptions for retirements.

Other Leavers

30. The current workforce planning assumptions are predicated on the Service losing 10 staff per year who leave for reasons other than their predicted retirement date.
31. These include transferring, or being promoted to other fire services, ill health retirements, dismissals, or resignation due to disciplinary processes, or staff leaving to pursue other careers.
32. Analysis over the last five years show this to average out to 11 per year. However, to date in 2021/22, 11 staff have already left for other reasons, one more than the prediction for the whole year before the half year point has been reached.
33. The Service has used On Call Migrations and Inter Brigade Transfers as a flexible approach to recruitment over recent years. This approach can provide a short lead-in time in order to react to a rapid change in establishment numbers. There are, however, pros and cons, e.g. it can:
 - Adversely impact upon On Call availability. Dual role firefighters typically have reduced On Call contracts and can take compensatory rest if called out.
 - Address an immediate skills gap such as a lack of Emergency Fire Appliance Drivers (EFAD).
 - Require the additional development of individuals.
34. Therefore, the continued blended approach of On Call Migration and Inter Brigade Transfers will be considered, along with traditional Wholetime and Community Safety Apprentice firefighter recruitment to be used to fill vacancies.

35. The Establishments Team is aware of the IRMP project to implement a new duty system at Wilmslow which may result in some staff needing to be redeployed within the Service.

Financial Implications

36. The “Grey Book” establishment projected forward to 31st March 2022 will include some staff above the funded total. The figures below provide an indication of the potential costs based upon two scenarios:

Based on 10 other leavers:

Nine additional staff above funded total - £405,000

Based on 15 other leavers:

Four additional staff above funded total - £180,000

Equality & Diversity Implications

37. A decision to open up wholetime recruitment has the potential to positively improve Equality and Diversity in the workforce and a Positive Action campaign to ensure that underrepresented groups are given every opportunity to apply will commence ahead of any planned recruitment campaign.

Environmental Implications

38. None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

STAFFING COMMITTEE – WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE (16 NOVEMBER 2020)