

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 7 JULY 2008

SUBJECT: FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008/11 – HR ISSUES

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11 includes fire and rescue staff issues.
- 1.2 Within chapter 3 of the document certain areas are designated as being within the remit of individual fire and rescue authorities, whilst others should be addressed via the Regional Management board. This report therefore provides an overview of the progress made and the future work programmes in respect of 'people' issues.

2 OVERVIEW

- 2.1 Paragraph 3.13 of the National Framework states:

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- Implement the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Ensure that all plans, policies, practices and procedures are effectively equality impact assessed and appropriate action is taken to remove or mitigate any adverse impact
- Produce and at least annually review an action plan for implementation of the Strategy, and report to elected members on progress
- Provide annually to Communities and Local Government evidence of progress on equality and diversity for publication in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report including:
 - statistical information on staff recruitment, progression and retention and service delivery across of staff across all diversity strands, and
 - qualitative information on policies, procedures, practices and processes which support equality and diversity in service delivery and the workplace as evidence of progress made.

Members will be aware that the National Equality and Diversity Strategy was released in May 2008 and the targets submitted to the Authority meeting held on 16th June 2008. At that meeting the targets were accepted in principle, including the stretch targets, and the Chief Fire Officer is currently considering the full strategy which will be subject to a further report at a future meeting.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

A statement detailing the Core Values has been developed for the Fire and Rescue Service by a stakeholder group led and facilitated by CFOA. The Core Values set out clearly the principles which the Service considers are fundamental to the development of an organisation which values and supports all members of its workforce and provides an effective service to the whole community. The Core Values have been developed to apply to both the Fire and Rescue Service as an organisation and to all members of staff. They provide a clear statement of the expectation of the Fire and Rescue Service with regard to the attitudes and behaviour's of all staff whatever their role within the organisation. This Authority has fully adopted the Core Values and integrated them into policies and procedures, with awareness development continually provided by the Equality and Diversity Officer.

The Authority also ensures that all members of staff are treated fairly and afforded equality of opportunity, including developing staff in a way which takes account of the differing needs of the individual, in order to deliver the Authority's aims and objectives effectively. We also ensure that development opportunities are better tailored to the needs of each member of the workforce based upon the Workforce Development Strategy.

The Authority has in place job share and part-time opportunities for staff and has fully embedded wholetime/retained contracts which enable retained firefighters to work full time in the wholetime service whilst continuing to provide retained fire cover. This has increased opportunities for staff to further develop and better integrate many communities into the mainstream Fire and Rescue service.

2.2 Paragraph 3.23 and 3.29 stated:

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- apply IPDS principles to the recruitment, development and progression of all staff
- use IPDS and the national processes based on it (National Firefighter Selection Tests, subject to final validation, and Assessment and Development Centres) for all Grey and Gold Book staff.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- ensure that they have in place role related training, development and assessment arrangements to develop and maintain the competence of staff. These should be linked to the IPDS framework and National Occupational Standards across the full range of operational activities
- have in place systematic arrangements to ensure incident and safety event outcomes inform the ongoing development of safe systems of work and training and development of staff. This should include the sharing of risk critical information on a regional/national basis when appropriate.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

This Authority continues to lead the regional recruitment process for wholetime firefighting staff and we have now complete three recruitments utilising the National Firefighter Selection Tests (NFST). Development is still ongoing in respect of further developing recruitment and delivering on a regional scale for all fire and rescue service posts. The Authority also leads the region in the delivery of the Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) process. Indeed this is the second full year whereby the three role assessments, i.e. supervisory, Middle and Strategic Managers, have been undertaken.

IPDS offers an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge of all staff, including those on the retained duty system. Flexible working arrangements, job sharing, part-time service as well as the nature of working on the retained duty system may mean that some people may not have the same opportunities for development in the workplace as those working full time on the wholetime duty system. The Authority has fully embedded the Workforce Development Strategy which provides a flexible means of developing people and implemented initiatives such as e-learning, distance learning and the delivery of development opportunities during weekends and evenings to meet the needs of many members of staff. Indeed the Workforce Development Strategy was recognised as 'notable practice' during the recent comprehensive performance review undertaken by the Audit Commission.

2.3 Paragraph 3.24 states:

Fire and Rescue Authorities should: carry out and record individual performance reviews annually which include an assessment of performance against:

- role map units, National Occupational Standards or job description duties as appropriate, and
- agreed annual objectives, including the setting and assessing of equality and diversity objectives.

The Authority has had in place for a number of years now a comprehensive performance development process for all employees. This is migrating to an electronic system which will enable better analysis and trends to be identified. In addition, annual objectives are set at departmental/Watch level and these now also include equality and diversity objectives.

2.4 Paragraph 3.32 states:

Fire and Rescue Authorities should: appropriately quality assure their training and development programmes, and their use of the National Firefighter Selection process and Assessment and Development Centres.

This Authority has achieved accreditation of the Learning and Development centre, and has also had necessary learning and development programmes externally quality assured by a recognised expert. As the firefighter selection and ADC process have been developed nationally, the Authority is represented on national working groups to further assess the suitability of these programmes. In addition, a regional initiative to audit the process is being undertaken which will be the subject of a further report on its conclusion.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 Progress has been made on a range of collaborative issues within the Region, although further work needs to be completed. The HR Strategic Plan forms a vital link in the chain to move HR issues forward on a more collaborative basis with this Authority taking the lead on many matters. A full review of the HR Strategic Plan will be undertaken during 2008 and be subject of a further report.

4 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There will be equality and fairness implications in respect of the release of the National Equality and Diversity Strategy which will be subject of a further report.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are is requested to:
- a) Endorse the actions outlined in this report;
 - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Strategic Plan 2008-2013
- National Framework 2008/11