

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 4**

**MEETING: 21 NOVEMBER 2011**

---

**SUBJECT: RETIREMENT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND SELECTION OF A SUCCESSOR**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

---

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out, for the consideration and approval of Members, the proposed retirement date of the Chief Fire Officer and the subsequent selection process and timetable necessary to ensure a suitable successor is appointed.

**2 RETIREMENT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

2.1 The current Chief Fire Officer joined Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service as a firefighter in 1978. In the following years he served at a number of fire stations within the Tyne and Wear area as well as working in several specialist departments.

2.2 He was first appointed as a principal officer in 2001 when he became Assistant Chief Officer with responsibility for operations and technical services and he had the great honour of becoming the service's Chief Fire Officer in 2007, following the retirement of Richard Bull.

2.3 After nearly 34 years of service, the Chief Fire Officer believes that, following the formal setting of the 2012/2013 Authority budget on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the time will be right to retire from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the exact date identified for this to occur is Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 23:59 hours.

2.4 Retiring at this point will help to ensure that his successor has sufficient time to fully establish themselves in the role well in advance of any difficult considerations that could arise in relation to setting the 2013/2014 budget (and future year budgets) as a result of the fire grant reductions arising from this government's comprehensive spending review 2010.

2.5 As a consequence of this it will be necessary for the Authority to have an appointment process in place to ensure that the most suitable individual is selected for the post. This process, together with the proposed timetable for its implementation, is set out below for the consideration and approval of Members.

### **3 SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMETABLE**

- 3.1 The role of a Chief Fire Officer is to provide, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Authority, leadership and strategic direction to the organisation to the extent that staff feel confident and able to work to their full capacity.
- 3.2 In addition to this, traditionally, the role of the Chief Fire Officer has also included a requirement to provide operational command at incidents when necessary. The consequence of this requirement is that Chief Fire Officers have, almost exclusively, been drawn from operational personnel.
- 3.3 However, in the opinion of the Chief Fire Officer, the requirement to provide operational command is not an absolutely essential prerequisite of the post, given that the overwhelming majority of the workload of a current Chief is concentrated upon the corporate demands associated with managing a large organisation.
- 3.4 Accordingly, having discussed the matter with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Chief Fire Officer proposes that the eligibility criteria for the forthcoming vacancy should be such that individuals who have experience of managing at a strategic level within a fire and rescue service but do not necessarily possess operational experience will be able to apply for the post, in addition to those who do possess such operational experience.
- 3.5 Adopting this approach will ensure that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority can give due consideration to the widest pool of talent within the fire and rescue service in general and from which they can select the best candidate for the post.
- 3.6 With regard to the selection process itself it is proposed that, subject to the approval of Members, the post will be advertised within the fire and rescue service community for approximately two weeks and at the end of this time the Chief Fire Officer will oversee the compilation of a long list of potential candidates for the vacancy.
- 3.7 Those individuals who qualify for the long list will be invited to participate in an assessment and development centre the purpose of which will be to provide information as to the abilities of the selected candidates to potentially undertake the role. The information derived from this assessment and development centre will be presented to the Authority's Appointments Committee who will have the responsibility for shortlisting the candidates.
- 3.8 Those individuals who are selected for the shortlist will be invited to participate in a final selection round that will involve informal meetings with the Chief Fire Officer and Personnel Officer from Sunderland City Council, who will provide feedback on these meetings to Appointment Committee Members. There will also be an informal meeting with the Members of the Authority's Appointments Committee on the evening prior to the formal interview. Finally, the formal interview will be undertaken by the Appointments Committee, on the day following the informal meetings.

- 3.9 At the end of the formal interview process it will be the responsibility of the Appointments Committee to evaluate the information they have garnered in regard to the candidates and determine which of them should be appointed to the post of Chief Fire Officer.
- 3.10 Further information relating to the timetable for this appointment process is set out for the consideration of Members in Appendix A.

#### **4 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Expanding the eligibility criteria to enable those with experience of managing fire and rescue services at a strategic level but who may not possess operational experience will ensure that the Authority is able to consider a broader range of applicants than would otherwise be the case.
- 4.2 This is in line with the Authority's proactive approach to equality and diversity both in the workplace. This approach has been recognised as a key strength of both the Authority and the service itself.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are some costs associated with the appointment process but it is not anticipated that these will amount to more than £2,000. This can be met from within the existing revenue budget for 2011/2012.

#### **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Members are requested to:
- I. Consider the content of this report ;
  - II. Approve the proposed retirement date of the Chief Fire Officer;
  - III. Approve the proposal to invite applications from suitably qualified brigade managers (Assistant Chief Officer and above);
  - IV. Approve the selection process and associated timetable, and;
  - V. Receive further reports as appropriate.
-

## **Brigade Manager (Chief Fire Officer/Chief Officer)**

### **Appointment Process – November 2011 / January 2012**

#### **Activity Date**

Application period	22 <sup>nd</sup> November - 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2011
Compilation of long list	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2011
Assessment Centre	11 <sup>th</sup> / 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
Appointment Committee shortlist	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
Informal interview CFO and Personnel Officer	25 <sup>th</sup> January (Day) 2012
Informal dinner with Appointment Committee	25 <sup>th</sup> January (evening) 2012
Appointment Committee final interviews	26 <sup>th</sup> January 2012