

MEETING: 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO THE TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT SCHEME

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to amend the currently approved establishment structure to better reflect the future requirements of the Authority.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Monitoring of the current and future operational establishment level is undertaken on a monthly basis, to ensure that the Authority can continue to meet its statutory obligations in respect of the provision of a Fire and Rescue Service.

2.2 The operational staffing needs of the Authority require a number of factors to be taken in to account in order to determine overall staffing levels. These include external training requirements; sickness absence and employee leave entitlement. Also considered is the number of staff required to crew the operational fleet of fire appliances 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Included within the process are projections for retirements and resignations anticipated for current and future years.

3 OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

3.1 The Chief Fire Officer has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of the existing operational staffing profile to ascertain whether current crewing levels are relevant to the demands of the Service. Due to the increased level of training now being undertaken locally instead of at external establishments such as the Fire Service College, together with the continued reduction in employee sickness absence levels, it is considered appropriate that the operational staffing profile can now be realigned to reflect these changes. This proposal would result in a reduction of twelve posts (8 x Firefighter and 4 x Crew Manager) from the current establishment, which would be achieved through natural wastage.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications relating to the proposed reduction of the posts is a saving of £451,384 per annum, inclusive of on costs.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The health and safety implications are detailed in the main body of the report.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The equality and diversity implications are detailed in the main body of the report.

8 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The learning and development implications are detailed in the main body of the report.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Consultation on the proposals has been undertaken with the representative bodies. The Fire Brigades Union has expressed the strong view that they are fundamentally opposed to any reduction in the operational establishment. However, should such reductions go ahead they have stated that the efficiencies generated should be re-invested in the form of alternative posts to bolster the work of other departments within the service.
- 9.2 The Chief Fire Officer has noted these concerns. However, it is his opinion that the proposals set out in this report provide the optimum balance between organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Authority is requested to approve:
- a) The reduction in establishment of twelve operational posts by natural wastage by 1st April 2012;
 - b) Receive further reports as appropriate

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Health and Safety Executive Guidance Document – HSG 65.