

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 11**

**MEETING: 12 OCTOBER 2020**

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**SUBJECT: RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION ACTIVITY UPDATE 2020**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give Fire Authority members an update on recruitment and staff promotion activity by the Service during 2020.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The recruitment of new employees into the Service and the promotion of existing employees into more senior roles are both indicators of the health and development of the Service. The volume of recruitment and promotions are influenced mainly by the rate of staff turnover (retirements and resignations, age profile etc) and by changes in the Service's approved establishment.
- 2.2 During the period 2010 to 2018 recruitment was very subdued while the Service achieved unprecedented downsizing of the workforce through natural turnover. Levels of staff promotions were also lower than previously necessary, as new, flatter organisation structures were implemented and the number of promotion opportunities reduced.
- 2.3 However, since the beginning of 2020 there has been a notable increase in the number of recruitment and promotion 'campaigns' run by the Service, as the data set out below shows. All of this has taken place against a backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and the challenges that this has and continues to bring.

**3 RECRUITMENT AND STAFF PROMOTION ACTIVITY DURING 2020**

- 3.1 The information in this report relates to the period January to September 2020 in comparison with the same period on 2019. Taken overall, the data shows an increase of approximately of 30% in recruitment/promotion activity. The data shows, for example, that the Service recruited 26% more Trainee Firefighters and triple the previous number of internal recruitments (excluding the Crew Manager process detailed below).
- 3.2 It is notable that since March 2020 all recruitment and selection activity has been done in a 'Covid-secure' manner, with processes adapted in the light of specific risk assessments. Adaptations have included interviewing candidates

by video conference for some roles; holding other assessments in socially distanced facilities and amending on-boarding procedures to on-line.

- 3.3 As previously reported to the Human Resources Committee, in April 2020 a cohort of Trainee Firefighters commenced their training in a Covid-secure, socially distanced redesigned format due to the coronavirus. The trainees completed their training and passed out on 23 July 2020, and became operational in August 2020. A new Trainee Firefighter course with a cohort of 24 commenced on 7 September 2020 and will complete their training in December 2020.
- 3.4 A notable example of a promotion process was one that was undertaken in July / August 2020 for promotion to operational Crew Manager roles. As a result of other promotions and retirements, the Service had accrued a large number of vacancies. A totally revised assessment process was developed following a rigorous evaluation of a previous process used in 2018/19 and staff feedback. This resulted in 21 Firefighters being successfully promoted into Crew Manager vacancies in August.
- 3.5 The feedback from candidates and the Fire Brigades Union about the assessment process has been very positive, and will be used as the basis for future promotion processes for different roles. A working group is in the process of being established with many volunteers from across the Service who are keen to contribute to the updating and development of our approach to promotion processes.
- 3.6 Over the first nine months of the year the Service has substantively promoted and appointed managers in the roles of Area, Group, Station and Watch Manager roles which has strengthened our operational resilience. There has also been numerous appointments and in a wider range of department vacancies which has contributed to enabling our business continuity and organisational capacity to support the essential work of the Service.

## **4 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Relevant risk assessments have been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessments have 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.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs associated with running recruitment and promotion process are largely met from within the relevant departmental budgets; any exceptions to this are approved through the Chief Fire Officer's delegation scheme.

## **6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Recruitment and promotion opportunities are two of the key means by which the composition of the workforce changes over time, in terms of the employment and progression of people with protected characteristics throughout the workforce. Whilst the Service has been recognised for many years for its commitment to equality and diversity, despite our progress there remains a journey ahead of us to reach a point where our workforce truly reflects the diversity of the communities we serve in Tyne and Wear.
- 6.2 Adopting an evidence-based approach to Inclusion and Employee Experience, and the forthcoming recruitment of an Inclusion Manager in autumn 2020, will provide additional impetus to this from 2021 onwards. The Service's recruitment and promotion procedures and techniques will need to continue to evolve and develop in response to feedback and lessons learned.

## **7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- a) Endorse the contents of this report
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

