

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY****Item No 5****MEETING: HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE 20 JULY 2020**

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**SUBJECT: FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT****JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, / CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY), FINANCE DIRECTOR AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This paper provides an update to Members on progress and future plans relating to Firefighter recruitment initiatives.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Recruitment of firefighters is critical to ensuring the effective management of operational deployment, in-line with budget and risk critical activities. The service is currently under establishment and recruitment is required to balance operational deployment within the current challenging financial environment, to support the delivery of the Strategic Community Safety Plan (SCSP).
- 2.2 An inclusive campaign is essential particularly in the national context. For a number of years Fire and Rescue Services across the UK have found diversifying the workforce to be a challenge. Whilst Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) has a long-standing commitment to diversifying the workforce through inclusive workforce campaigns, the ability to attract a diverse workforce remains a national challenge. TWFRS has had relative success across the recruitment of all roles, as we strive to recruit people that represent the communities we serve, whilst ensuring we attract the highest quality of candidates as future employees.

**3. RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN – WHOLE TIME TRAINEES**

- 3.1 In 2018 and in collaboration with County Durham and Darlington and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Services, the campaign resulted in the appointment of 24 Trainee Firefighters, 23 successfully passed the course and commenced employment with TWFRS. Trainees joined watches at the end of December 2018, having completed the course on 15 December 2018.
- 3.2 In September 2019 a further cohort of Trainee Firefighters commenced their training with TWFRS and 14 passed the course and became operational in January 2020.
- 3.3 In April 2020 another cohort of Trainee Firefighters commenced their training, in a socially distanced redesigned format due to the coronavirus and are due to Pass Out on 23 July 2020, and become operational in August 2020.

- 3.4 Although final numbers are being established, it is anticipated that a new Trainee Firefighter course with a cohort of 24 will commence on 7 September 2020.
- 3.5 Following the 2018-19 recruitment, a full debrief was conducted, with good practice and areas of learning captured to inform future programmes. With further development of that work, key themes have been identified and working groups set up to challenge the topics identified as improvement areas;
- Employer Branding – how we present and describe TWFRS as an employer of choice, as well as our employee value proposition.
  - Recruitment Process – the candidate experience from application, on boarding to hire.
  - Inclusive Workforce – how do we work with our current employees to inform and educate them on diversification, allowing them to become the advocates of change through delivery of key messages.
- 3.6 These findings are part of a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation in our recruitment, selection and induction processes. The coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdown and changes to working practices since March 2020 have resulted in the redesign of part of the selection tests.

## **INTER SERVICE TRANSFERS**

- 3.7 An advertisement for the recruitment of experienced Firefighters, through Inter Service Transfer (IST) from other Services was published in September 2019. This resulted in significant interest and following robust selection tests a cohort of 20 Firefighters and Crew Managers commenced employment on 9 December 2019 with their two week induction course and were subsequently deployed to operational roles in late December 2019.
- 3.8 The IST process was repeated again in February 2020, with a cohort of 10 transferees commencing employment on 23 March 2020 and becoming operation in early April 2020. Recruitment via Inter Service Transfer allows the Service to acquire experienced and trained staff who can be operationally effective very quickly, balancing the numbers of new trainees with experienced crew members. The latter supports our focus on high standards in front line operational response, which was reflected in the 2019 HMICFRS inspection.
- 3.9 A further advertisement for Inter Service Transfers of Firefighters and Crew Managers was published in June 2020, which attracted 19 applicants. Following the initial selection process, 10 candidates have been invited for assessment during July, with those being successful commencing their induction training on 21 September 2020.

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Risk management has been adopted throughout the campaign to date and will continue to be monitored throughout.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A total budget of £131,520 has been set within the contingency provision in the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 to cover the cost of recruitment activities, initial training costs and issues of uniform and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Trainee Firefighters and Inter Service Transfers commencing employment this year.
- 5.2 Additional HR staff resource is also required to manage the projects, at an estimated cost of £20,365 in this financial year, which is being accommodated through the HR departmental revenue budget.

## **6. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment and Adverse Impact Assessments have been undertaken at each stage of the campaign and will continue to be reviewed throughout.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The HR Committee is requested to:
- a) Note the contents of this report;
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned background papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- N/A