

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No. 5

MEETING: HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE 19 July 2021

SUBJECT: FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT

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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper provides an update 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 due to retirements, and is projected to remain so for the next two years at least, so ongoing Firefighter recruitment is required 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 Service, the campaign resulted in the appointment of 24 Trainee Firefighters, 23 successfully passed the course and commenced employment with TWFRS in DATE.
- 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 Covid secure, redesigned format, and 23 successfully completed the course to become operational in August 2020.

- 3.4 As the April 2020 course was delivered on a reformatted model which incorporated extensive health and safety measures to ensure the health and safety of both the trainers and trainees a full debrief was completed to understand any lessons learned for incorporation into future training courses required under pandemic conditions.
- 3.5 In September 2020 a second cohort of Trainee Firefighters commenced a Covid19 secure training course and 18 successfully passed the course and became operational in December 2020.
- 3.6 In April 2021 a third cohort of Trainee firefighters commenced a Covid19 secure training course. A total of 24 recruits commenced their training on 26th April and the number of trainees who successfully complete the course will be known in early August when the course is scheduled to conclude.
- 3.7 In April 2020 the Service commenced a new campaign to recruit trainee firefighters for a course commencing September 2021. This campaign is TWFRS specific. All recruitment processes and assessments have again been constructed to maintain Covid19 pandemic related health and safety priorities. This campaign again incorporated an additional assessment to test candidate fitness, through the use of the bleep test, prior to individuals progressing to the Role Related Tests. Candidates were undertaking role related assessments and interviews during June and will be required to attend medicals in early July. Delivery of the course is again being scheduled for 24 candidates based on current Covid restrictions. However should Covid restrictions be eased slightly or completely lifted alternative plans are being developed to accommodate an increase in the number of candidates should that opportunity present itself.
- 3.8 Planning is currently underway for the next campaign to attract applicants for courses in 2022.

4. INTER SERVICE TRANSFERS

- 4.1 The service has decided to defer utilising this source of recruitment for an interim period as it considers it has exhausted the supply pool of quality IST's.

5. DIVERSIFICATION ACTIVITIES

- 5.1 During 2021 volunteers from across the Service have been involved in diversification working groups. Participants represent a cross section of the workforce from services such as BTC, Service Delivery, and recent whole time and inter service transfer recruits, Trade Union representatives and members from the HR team. Activities resulting from those workgroups continue to be progressed and include reviewing our positive action campaigns, improvements to the current selection testing processes and increasing engagement with underrepresented groups which directly support the Inclusion pillar of our TWFRS 2025 Vision.

5.2 The diversification working groups now also benefits from support and guidance from the recently appointed Inclusion Manager and Inclusion Advisor who are assisting in the development of new positive action measures for the service.

5.3 All of this work will influence our ongoing recruitment activity into 2022 and beyond.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Ongoing Firefighter recruitment is funded by a specific budget as part of the Service's financial management arrangements.

8. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

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

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The HR Committee is requested to:

- a) Note the contents of this report;
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- N/A

