

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE:	17TH MAY 2012
REPORT NO.	CFO/062/12
REPORTING OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	MR. NICK MERNOCK
SUBJECT:	RECRUITMENT OF 21 HOUR CONTRACT FIREFIGHTER POSTS FOR LONG TERM SUCCESSION PLANNING

ARE THERE ARE NO APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members consider the recruitment of a limited number of Firefighters on 21 hour contracts each year as a long term succession planning measure.

Recommendation

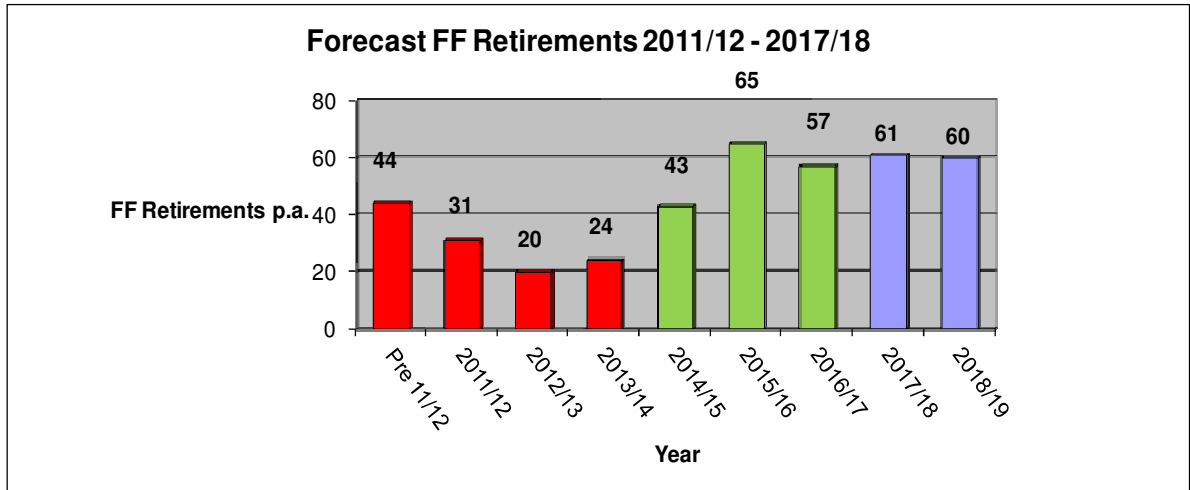
2. That Members approve in principle the recruitment of a limited number of Firefighters on 21 hour contracts each year as a long term succession planning measure.
3. The CFO be requested to identify a detailed recruitment strategy to support long term succession in light of the eventual financial position.

Introduction & Background

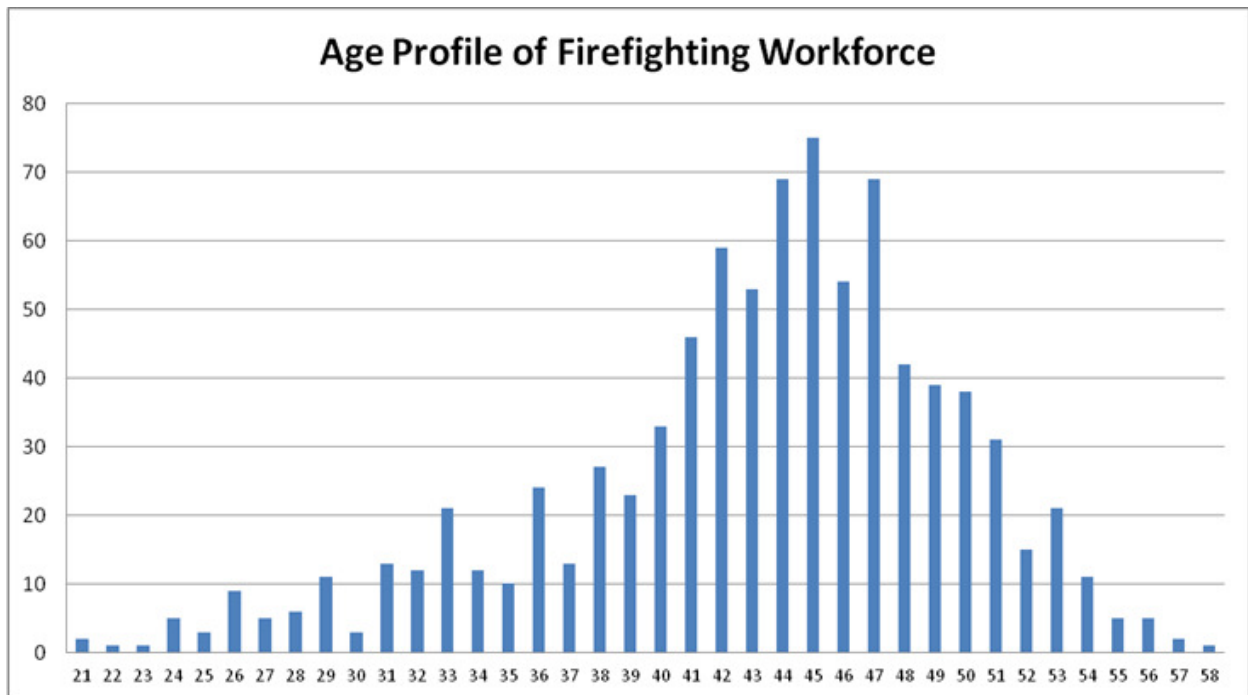
4. Members are well aware of the scale of the financial challenge facing the Authority as a result in the cuts in years 1 and 2 of the spending review and from the further back loaded cuts to be announced in December for years 3 and 4 (2013/14 and 2014/15).
5. The best case planning assumptions at this time indicates that savings of £5.5m might be required from the operational response capability which would necessitate a reduction of 150 Firefighter posts.
6. The Authority is committed to avoiding compulsory redundancy wherever possible and has therefore been adding to its level of reserves so as to use natural retirement rates as the means by which to manage down numbers.

7. To achieve a reduction of 150 firefighter posts using natural turnover would take until 2017. Table 1 below details the forecasted retirements from 2011/12 to 2017/18 (the red columns are those which are committed to the savings options for years 1 and 2 and the green columns are those required to achieve a further saving above those already planned.)

Table 1 Forecast Firefighter retirements 2011/12 – 2017/18



8. The government is considering changes to the Firefighter Pension Scheme (FPS) which are likely to extend the normal retirement age. Currently most of our workforce is in the FPS as opposed to the New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS) and would expect to retire at age 50 with 30 years' service. Firefighters who have joined since 2006 are in the NFPS which has a retirement age of 60. Current government consultation on a new Firefighter Pension Scheme for April 2015 is based upon a retirement age of 60. However most of the government consultation to date and it's recently released draft heads of terms are predicated on protecting the pension conditions of those within ten years of retirement. It is therefore expected that the vast majority of our firefighters will continue to be able to retire at 50 (see paragraph 8 below).
9. Beyond 2017/18 retirements remain at relatively high levels as the Authority has an ageing workforce. The graph below shows the age profile of the current firefighter workforce. Of 869 uniformed staff;
- 408 (47%) are aged 45 or over
 - 668 (77%) are aged 40 or over
 - Assuming all staff aged over 42 will have left the organization through retirement within 10 years then this will total 589 people i.e. even if we downsize (by for the purposes of example by 150) we would still need to recruit 439 staff across a 10 year period – over 40 per year.
 - 4.9% of workforce aged under 30



10. Approximately 65% of the operational workforce is within 10 years of retirement. It is essential therefore that the Authority has a long term recruitment strategy that mitigates against the loss of large numbers of experienced operational personnel over this period.
11. A minimum of 5 trainee Firefighters are required to deliver a training programme owing to the personnel distribution on standard practices. The optimum number of trainee Firefighters recruited would be 8 – 10 per course.
12. Members are therefore requested to approve in principle the recruitment of a small number of Firefighters contracted to 21 hours per week during this and future financial years dependant on the scale of the cuts imposed on the Authority in years 3 and 4 of the spending review, the details of which will be known by December. It is proposed that this minimum requirement is reviewed in detail once the Authority is clear as to its exact financial position and the scale of reserves required to support its financial plan.
13. If the scale of the cuts is such that compulsory Firefighter redundancies are inevitable then it is unlikely that any recruitment process would be undertaken.

Equality & Diversity Implications

14. Service Plan objective SP/12/13/1.5 (Equality) determines a target of all future recruit courses having a minimum make up of 20% female and 8% black minority ethnic employees by 2017. Approval of the recommendations contained within this report by Members offers the Authority the opportunity to achieve this target and to deliver a more representative workforce.

Staff Implications

15. The Service already employs 13 Firefighters on 21 hour contracts. The terms and conditions of these personnel are identical to Firefighters on 42 hour contracts.

Legal Implications

16. There are no legal implications contained within this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

17. The additional cost of recruitment and the resultant 21 hour contracts would be maintained within the overall staffing budget.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

18. The recruitment of a small number of Firefighters each year on 21 hour contracts will begin to mitigate against the impact of the retirement of relatively large numbers of experienced personnel post 2017. More large scale recruitment and succession planning will be required beyond this point.

Contribution to Achieving Our Mission:

“Safer, Stronger Communities, Safe, Effective Firefighters”

19. A succession plan to ensure the maintenance of competent experienced Firefighters contributes directly to achieving the mission.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None