



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee – 15 September 2021

Report title: Workforce Development Update – Succession Planning

Lead Member: Councillor Steven Lambert – People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

Report sponsor: Mick Osborne – Deputy Chief Fire Officer

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the report and appendices be noted.

Executive summary:

A key aim of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority's (BMKFA) workforce development is to ensure that plans are in place to ensure sustainable, fit for purpose, effective leadership and that workforce capacity and capabilities are available to deliver the Public Safety Plan, Authority's vision and corporate priorities. These plans also consider building in ongoing and increasing flexibility to accommodate fast paced external workforce change drivers, balanced by current and predicted changes to workforce demographics.

These aims are achieved through regular systematic and rigorous Strategic Workforce and Succession Planning processes, which incorporate current Public Safety Plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges. Outcomes from these processes are subsequently translated into timely interventions to ensure the Authority continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build capability. In addition, it provides opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internal and where required external to fill identified key positions.

This report provides an update on the Authority's progress in relation to workforce development and sets out the outcomes of the 2021 Workforce and Succession Planning review. It offers reassurance to the Executive Committee that the necessary safeguards and contingency plans are in place to future proof the Authority, mitigate risk and optimise opportunities during a period of significant change and increasing demands; all to continually provide the best service possible to our communities.

- Appendix A outlines the potential risks, opportunities and interventions that have been put in place

- Appendix B outlines the succession position for the Senior Management Team (SMT)
 - Appendix C outlines succession plans for other critical roles across the service
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Financial implications:

Any cost implications will be managed within existing Directorate budgets and the planned spend on Training is agreed by SMB and The Training Strategy Group.

Any additional spend will be considered as part of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process.

A £50k growth bid was submitted and approved by Members as part of the 2021/22 MTFP, to fund a pilot leadership development programme. There is a plan for a potential further bid in a future year, subject to evaluating the upcoming pilot programme. This will help to mitigate some of the risks identified by accelerating our development of staff to ensure the Authority has the right people, with the right skills, ready to perform the roles.

Risk management:

Staff Availability is an identified corporate risk which is reviewed regularly by SMT and the Overview and Audit Committee. Plans are in place to mitigate this risk.

There is a significant risk of high staff turnover at middle and senior management level over the next two years, therefore the Authority needs to be pro-active in developing these skills now to be able react to this level of change.

Legal implications:

In addition to certain appointments required by statute, the Buckinghamshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 provides that "the Authority may appoint such other officers and employees as they think necessary for the efficient discharge of their functions".

[Section 41 of the Localism Act 2011](#) requires that the Authority must comply with its Pay Policy Principles and Statement for the relevant financial year when making a determination that relates to the remuneration, or other terms and conditions of a 'chief officer' (defined elsewhere in the Act).

'Terms and conditions' includes : [Section 38\(4\)\(f\)](#) 'the approach to the payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office under or to be employed by the authority'.

Paragraph 30 of the Authority's Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 provides: 'Re-employment/re-engagement will not normally occur following retirement, however there may be exceptional circumstances where specialist knowledge and expertise are required for a defined period of time in the event of which re-employment/reengagement may be considered. In the exceptional circumstance

that reemployment/re-engagement is necessary in the interest of public safety, this decision will be subject to prior approval at a meeting of the Fire Authority in open session.'

This mirrors the requirements and the criteria ('transparent, justifiable and time limited') in [paragraphs 6.7 to 6.9 of the National Framework](#) vis-à-vis 'officers at Brigade or Area Manager level, and above, or those with comparable responsibilities to those roles'.

Paragraphs 6.10 of the National Framework: 'To ensure greater fairness and the exchange of talent and ideas, all principal fire officer posts must be open to competition nationally, and fire and rescue authorities must take account of this in their workforce planning'.

The National Framework is statutory guidance to which the Authority must have regard in carrying out its functions. The statutory requirement 'to have regard to' something is along the lines of a requirement to consider it. It falls short of a requirement to make that thing the Authority's only priority, and it may have considered a requirement in the National Framework depart from it provided that there is a cogent rationale for doing so.

Privacy and security implications:

Appendix B and C contain personal information on roles within the Authority, therefore, to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained, these appendices have been marked as restricted access.

Duty to collaborate:

The Authority continues to work with its Thames Valley Fire Service partners, through regular resourcing meetings to determine a collaborative approach to operational recruitment.

The Service continues to work with other local councils, fire and emergency service partners on continuous improvement and development, by designing and arranging national and regional events, and through sharing best practice.

Health and safety implications:

There are no Health and Safety implications.

Environmental implications:

There are no Environmental implications.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Authority's approach to workforce development supports and endorses the delivery of the Equality and Diversity Objectives 2020-2025.

The Authority continues to improve the diversity of its workforce and during the last firefighter apprenticeship recruitment we had a small increase in both Female and BAME.

In previous years the Authority has been mindful of trying to reduce the average age of the operational workforce.

Workforce diversity is an ongoing priority. Building on the successes to date with our apprenticeship programme and utilising the national On Call awareness campaign material our aims are:

- To increase awareness through TV collaboration work and joined up resourcing
- Existing workforce who already interact with the local community being utilised to promote the service we deliver and being supported by our ED&I ambassadors
- The continuation of identifying role models within the organisation who can promote the values, commitment to diversity and our employment propositions - we have a national diversity ambassador

Consultation and communication:

Where succession is related to SMB, this will be discussed with members of the Authority directly.

Regular communication across the Authority relating to promotions, vacancies, learning and training opportunities are delivered via:

- Blogs
- Promoting development centre events
- Intranet articles
- Regular engagement with staff / face to face briefings
- Study workshops

Background papers:

Executive Committee – September 2020 - Business Continuity and Resilience – Succession Planning

[Bucks Fire & Rescue](#)

Executive Committee – November 2019 - Business Continuity and Resilience – Succession Planning

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/131119_exec_committee_agenda.pdf
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Fire Authority – 18 September 2019 – Senior Management Team Restructure

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/6815/6797/5308/FIRE_AUTHORITY_AGENDA_AND_RE_PORTS_180919-min.pdf

Executive Committee – 19 September 2018 – Business Continuity and Resilience – Succession Planning

[https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/9815/3631/0239/ITEM 10 Business Continuity and Resilience - Succession Planning Appendix C.pdf](https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/9815/3631/0239/ITEM_10_Business_Continuity_and_Resilience_-_Succession_Planning_Appendix_C.pdf)

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Home Office, May 2018](#)

BMKFA Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2020/21

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/pay-policy-2020-21.pdf/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
A	Workforce Development Update - Potential Risks, Opportunities, and Interventions	
B	Workforce Development Update - Succession Planning - SMT	Not for publication
C	Workforce Development Update - Succession Planning - Critical Roles	Not for publication

Workforce Development Update
Potential Risks, Opportunities, and Interventions
July 2021

Senior Management Team (SMT) development and future proofing:

The immediate and longer-term succession plans for SMT are detailed within Appendix B. The succession planning process for SMT is an iterative approach, that is formulated through discussion, engagement, and continuous development with SMT members.

This approach promotes the seeking of internal and external opportunities for SMT development - a most recent example of this is the temporary secondment of an Area Commander into the Deputy Chief Fire Officer role within a neighbouring Service.

SMT members are actively encouraged to hold positions on NFCC Committees to enable networking and inform future working practices whilst enhancing their own personal development. Attendance at these external events are kept under continuous review and primarily based on tangible benefits to the Authority.

The Authority is committed to developing its workforce and has the processes in place to achieve this, however recognises that there may be a requirement to recruit future leaders outside of the current workforce and this is included within the succession plans.

In 2020 the Authority was the first Fire & Rescue Service to hold a senior manager assessment and development centre, which invited and accepted applications from external applicants. This broadened the Authority's development pools and the skills, knowledge and experience within them.

Options to nominate members of SMT for the forthcoming NFCC Executive Leadership Programme are being explored.

As part of the Leadership and Management Development Framework, a coaching and mentoring scheme is being introduced, with members of SMT being trained to enable them to mentor future senior managers of the Authority.

Notable Workforce Risks to The Authority:

Age Discrimination Remedy – Sargeant:

On 20 December 2018 the Court of Appeal handed down the judgment in the Firefighters transitional appeal case. The judgment found that the transitional protections introduced with the new pension Scheme in 2015 were unlawfully discriminatory on grounds of age. This matter has been remitted to the Employment Tribunal to determine a remedy.

On 15 July 2019 the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made a written ministerial statement confirming that, as ‘transitional protection’ was offered to members of all the main public service pension schemes, the difference in treatment will need to be removed across all those schemes for members with relevant service. The impact of this ruling may mean senior/middle managers potentially retiring earlier than previously forecasted, the mitigations, opportunities and interventions detailed below assist with minimising this impact.

Risk Mitigation, Opportunities, and Interventions:

Regular systematic and rigorous Strategic Workforce and Succession Planning processes are in place, which incorporate current Public Safety Plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges. Outcomes from these processes are subsequently translated into timely interventions to ensure the Authority continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build capability. In addition, it provides opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internal and where required external to fill identified key positions.

In line with BMKFA extant recruitment and selection procedure, and its Pay Policy Statement, re-engagement or re-employment of fire officers and firefighters is an option for consideration and was implemented with approval by the Authority at its meeting on 10 June 2020 for the DCFO role.

The Authority has been pro-active in its approach to recruitment and since the approval of the Authority’s apprenticeship programme in 2015, has recruited firefighters annually to support frontline resources. The apprenticeship programme continues to evolve to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of the Authority. A report detailing next steps and recommendations for the apprenticeship programme will be presented to the Authority in December 2021.

The Authority undertook a review of its performance and development process with the aim of refreshing the appraisal process, ensuring it was fit for purpose and delivering effective performance reviews for all staff. All employees are required to have an annual appraisal, where their commitment to their behaviours linked to the Authority’s values is an essential element. Quality assurance of appraisal returns is undertaken to identify themes, and to assist with training requirements. Performance Management and the revised process is to be included as part of the learning outcomes of the middle manager leadership programme, which forms part of the proposed Leadership and Management Development Framework.

The Training Needs Analysis (TNA) process assesses the need for staff training at least annually. This TNA is translated into prioritised learning programmes, approved by the Training Strategy Group and scrutinised to ensure alignment with business priorities, business continuity succession plans and approved budgets.

The Authority's workforce development programme, continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in staff with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed. All elements/modules of our promotional process have been reviewed, consulted on and brought together in one Operational Promotional Procedure to provide clarity and consistency to staff on the requirements and route for promotion.

Following the successful pilot of a scheme used to identify and develop future senior leaders in the Authority, this has been embedded into the recently refreshed appointments and promotions procedure and a new Leadership and Management Development Framework is being developed to support and assist with the development of existing and newly recruited or promoted managers.

All these interventions continue to futureproof the Service and minimise the potential impact on its workforce, ensuring the operational commitment can be maintained.