



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Strategic Board</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2020	<b>Report Number</b>	
<b>Report Author:</b>	Karl Edwards		
<b>Presented By</b>	Karl Edwards		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>ECFRS Workforce Plan</b>		
<b>Type of Report:</b>	Decision		

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Strategic Board are asked to acknowledge and approve Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Workforce Plan. Furthermore a specific focus should be applied to the following areas.

1. Strategic Board are asked to note the progress made since the interim workforce plan was submitted in April 2020.
2. Endorse the activities contained in the 'What's Next?' section of the report at attached in Appendix 2.

## BACKGROUND

SLT reviewed an interim Workforce Plan in April 2020 for consideration; this included a near term action plan focused on recruitment for whole time and on-call which has now commenced.

These activities have been progressed, along with a review of leadership resourcing and succession planning arrangements to underpin our workforce strategy, including our approach to talent attraction and resourcing across priority areas and employee groups (see appendix 1).

The updated workforce plan attached (see appendix 2) provides an update on these activities and a plan of workforce activities which will enable us to take steps to mitigate future capacity gaps.

Engagement with both our management groups and representative bodies has been sought throughout the development of both the slides in (Appendix 1), Managing our resources, right people, right place, right time and the workforce plan detailed in (Appendix 2).

It is essential that ECFRS ensures that it has a strategic workforce plan that demonstrates that we have the right people, with the right skills in the right place to accomplish our activities and strategic objectives. Such planning inevitably involves recruiting, training and deploying the people needed to achieve the right deliverables whilst demonstrating and working to our values. Waiting until the moment the objectives have to be achieved with the right people and right skills is not an option and will lead to increased risk, inefficiencies and compromise the wellbeing of our workforce.

We want to ensure that effective and timely workforce planning goes beyond forecasting headcount and can provide agile people solutions to complement the future direction of our organisation.

A strategic workforce plan informs good business decisions and yields important data such as recruitment ease or difficulty, time to hire, time to productivity, attrition rates and so forth, which can help identify risks and contingency actions.

Change and uncertainty make planning especially critical, and that through a structured planning process, we can position ourselves, not merely to tread water but to thrive by mapping and securing the workforce resources that we need now and for the future.

## **What can our workforce plan achieve**

ECFRS wants our workforce plan to provide insights for us as an organisation and to go beyond reacting to circumstantial events. Our workforce plan needs to work intelligently to help us focus on the following points.

- responding to the needs of our communities and partners and key stakeholders
- identifying skills gaps and areas of succession risk
- relevant strategies for aspiring leaders and people development
- targeting specific and identified inefficiencies
- employee retention initiatives
- improving the quality of outputs
- improving work-life balance
- recruitment and training to achieve a skilled workforce

## **Workforce planning process**

Our workforce plan has been a process of analysing the current workforce, determining future workforce needs, identifying the gap between the workforce we will have available and our future needs, and implementing solutions so that can accomplish our mission, goals, and strategic plan.

Our workforce planning has been undertaken through a series of steps and it is equally important to understand that it is an iterative process, not rigidly a linear one.

The main steps in our workforce can be summarised by the following diagram.



### **Make workforce planning a priority**

As with so many aspects of business management and HR activity, it is better to make a start than endlessly defer or become trapped in analysis paralysis. Begin simple workforce planning by talking to managers about where the organisation is going and their resourcing concerns. Help them investigate what is going on and what might work better. If things feel very uncertain, work with managers to develop some simple scenarios to find out where actions may need to be contingent on unfolding events.

Workforce planning is not a prescriptive process nor intended as an exact science. It is about improving organisational performance and reducing organisational risk by narrowing the gap between having the people it really needs and who it actually has.

‘The right people, with the right skills, in the right roles, at the right time and the right cost’ is what will ultimately deliver the right results for an organisation. By taking a proactive, methodical approach to workforce planning, all staff play a critical role in helping an organisation understand where the risks and opportunities are going to come from and how they can ensure they have the resources they need to respond successfully to whatever future scenario unfolds.

### **OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS**

Strategic Board members are asked to consider the proposed activities contained in the workforce plan (Appendix 2) and the recommended focus for next year’s strategic workforce plan. These activities will enable us to address a range of employment issues which affect our capacity and ability to effectively and efficiently resource our Service, helping us to deliver best value and high performance.

## **BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

Workforce Planning has several benefits which need to be taken into account in order to ensure that we experience the benefits outlined below.

- It would allow us to respond quickly and more strategically to change, as the organisation and managers can recognise emerging challenges in the workforce and business.
- It improves efficiency, effectiveness and productivity as employees possess the right skills, in the right place utilised at the right time.
- It facilitates strategic staffing and planning for future workforce so we can identify staffing needs in a timely manner, monitor attrition, and ensure that replacements are available to fill key vacancies.
- It strengthens our capability to support the achievement of service outputs now and in the future.
- It encourages an understanding of our workforce profile; ECFRS strategies and policies are therefore aligned with maximising the capacity of the existing workforce and shaping the desired workforce.
- It will help us with the identification of our people with the knowledge critical for effective and efficient service operations, and the organisation's management of knowledge and maintenance of corporate functions.

The risks of poor workforce planning can lead to following issues within an organisation.

- Lack of resources to enable an effective response
- Low employee engagement
- High turnover
- Less productive employees
- Weak leadership pipeline
- Reduced teamwork and collaboration
- Underutilisation and development of skills amongst individuals and teams

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any additional direct or indirect costs to deliver the interim plan will be submitted via a business case to SLT.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

The workforce plan addresses inclusion and diversity actions as part of our positive action in recruitment programme. We will continually measure and report on the impacts of our campaigns and progress in this respect.

## **WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT**

The interim workforce plan was developed through several engagement events and activities with area and group managers. The update is collated through various teams, workstreams, forums and reports.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific legal implications.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific health and safety implications that are evident from the design and implementation of the presented workforce plan.

### **Appendix 1**



### **Appendix 2**

