

# Essex County Fire and Rescue Services

## Strategic Workforce Plan 2020

Autumn 2020

Date of report: 28 August 2020





# Strategic Workforce Plan

Autumn 2020

**Our Resourcing Vision: Ensuring that we have the right people and skills to deliver the best service to our communities in Essex.**

## Introduction

This report provides an update on the workforce plan strategy and activities following an *interim report* which was submitted to the Service Leadership Team (SLT) in April 2020. The *interim report* that was submitted in April 2020 is attached as appendix 1.

The *interim report* focused on the priority capacity gaps in the Operational staff group, recognising that attraction and retention was less problematic in support functions.

The three main areas of activity within the *interim report* were: Whole Time Recruitment, On-Call Recruitment and Talent Management/Succession. This report describes the progress that has been made in these areas and the work that continues in this respect, within the context of the People Strategy commitments around Resourcing, as well as the priority activities for other areas of the service, specifically the Control Room and Prevention team (Technical Fire Safety).

## An update on our priorities

Whilst the COVID pandemic has presented some difficulties with recruitment in some areas, specifically assessment and selection and to some extent, onboarding, we have recruited new colleagues into the Service during lockdown and as the restrictions have begun to lift. This included our April Whole Time Squad and new On-call colleagues.

This section sets out the progress that has been made in these two areas, along with the ongoing work to enable our Service to ensure that we secure operational capacity to help us address critical skills shortages in the future.

## Workforce Profile

As at the end of June 2020 our full time equivalent employee total was 1373.20 compared to 1367.95 in January 2020 when the *interim report* data was run. The increase has been within Whole Time and On-call employee groups.

Our retention rates remain high overall at 95.5% compared to the UK public sector and UK workforce overall (over a rolling 12 month period), at 84% and 83% respectively.

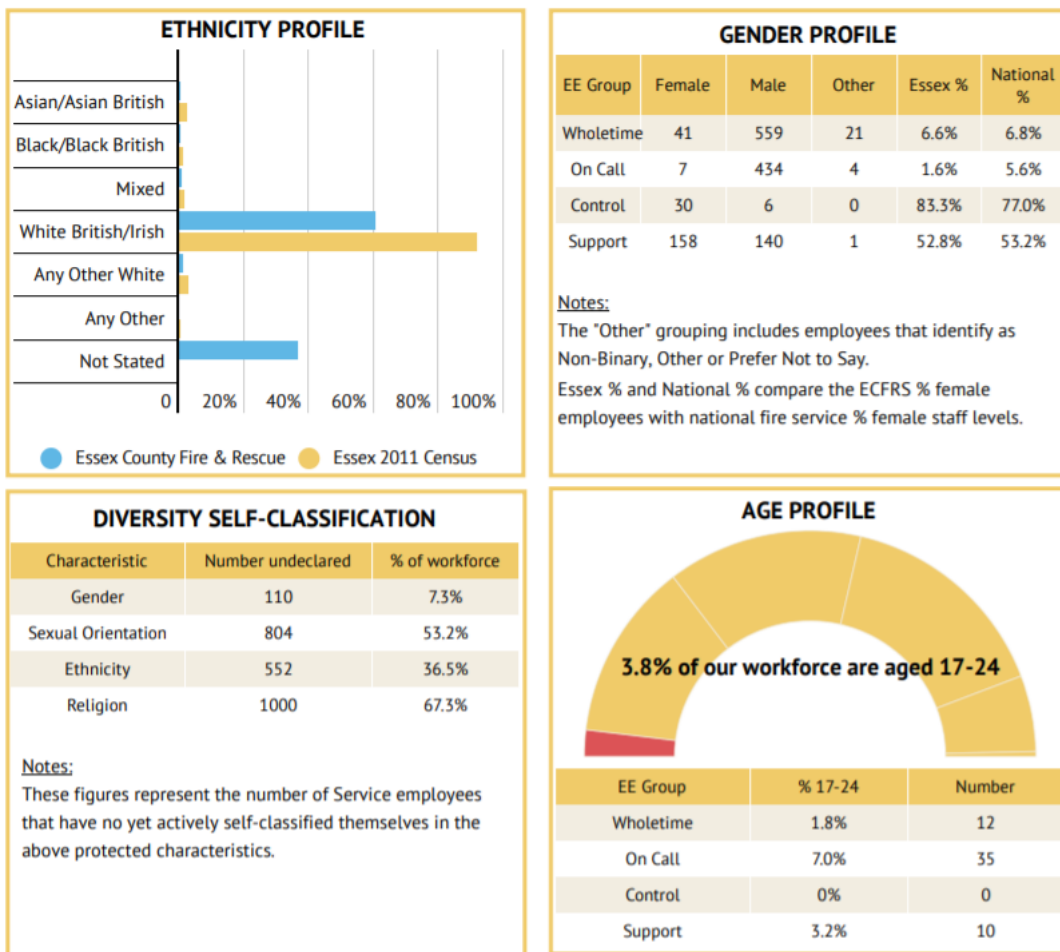
On-Call turnover continues to be higher than that for other staff areas, with 83.3% of that turnover being unplanned. In the Q1 period, Waltham Abbey had the highest number of leavers, with resignations due to relocation, pursuing other job opportunities and wanting to achieve a reduction in working commitments; all had joined our Service within the past

three years. There were two leavers from our priority stations in this quarter, including West Mersea and Ongar. One firefighter felt that they were unsuited to the work after a just under a year in the role, while the other was changing careers.

Wholetime leavers were predominantly as a result of planned retirements and just over 50% of Support leavers were as the result of an organisational restructure and planned retirements.

There are some improvements in our demographics, specifically a small increase in female operational employees, with 41 females in Whole Time. However, employees aged 17-24 continues to be low as well as diversity in other groups including ethnicity. Diagram 1 below reflects the profile as at 30 June 2020.

**Diagram 1.**



### Whole Time Recruitment

Following consideration of the *interim report* SLT agreed to put a programme of recruitment in place that would secure 36 Whole Time Fire Fighters each year, potentially for the next five years (subject to regular workforce plan review). This was agreed to enable us to effectively succession plan and create pathways into Crew, Watch and Station Manager positions across the County.

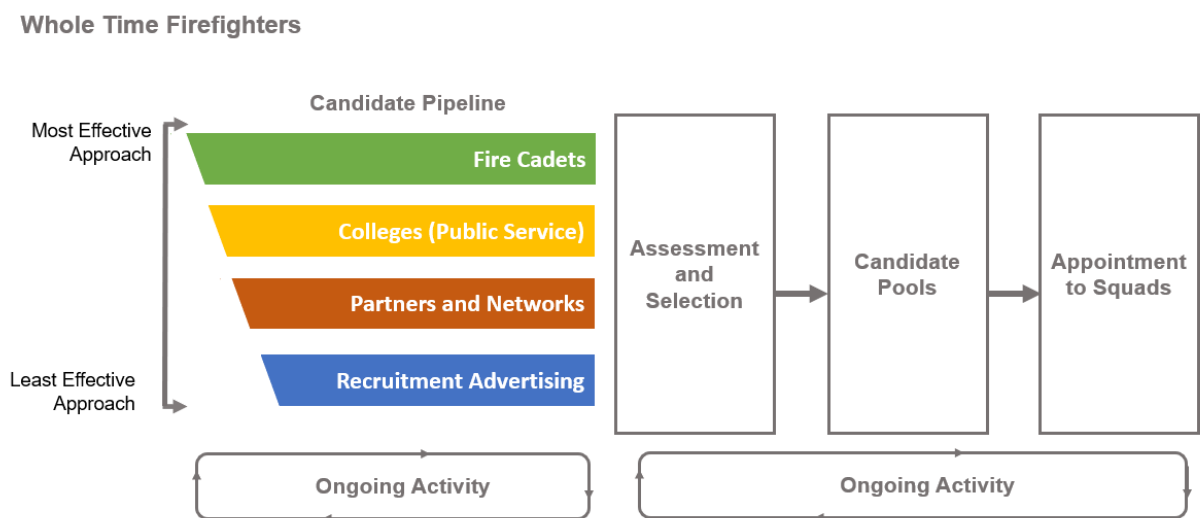
In our People Strategy 2020-24 we gave a commitment to review our recruitment approaches and assessment and selection methodology as well as taking a digital first

approach. Fairness, inclusion and diversity is a strong thread through these commitments. The work that has been done over the last few months has reflected our ambition to take positive action over an 18-month programme of work to improve our diversity and reach out to the widest potential candidate pools through stronger links with our Fire Cadets, Local Colleges and Partner Organisations. We anticipate that our approach will positively impact on our workforce diversity, specifically in respect of age, gender and ethnicity.

A fundamental change in our Candidate Attraction Strategy is the way in which we will manage our campaign to recruit whole time firefighters. We will take a much longer term approach rather than limiting applications each year with a short application window. This will enable candidates to give of their best, to create candidate pools and to take learning from our previous campaigns and from other FRS' to ensure that our assessment and selection processes did not introduce any unconscious bias or disproportionately reduce minority groups' opportunities to succeed.

Our Whole Time Talent Attraction Strategy is summarised in diagram 2 below:

**Diagram 2:**

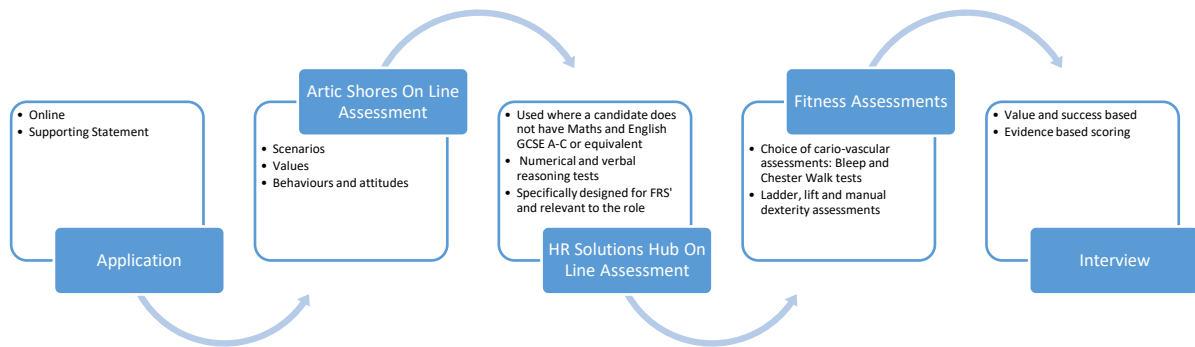


Our recruitment campaign is being supported by an exciting attraction approach with ongoing outreach work, development of attraction materials and use of a range of social media platforms. This approach will continue to help us to achieve our ambition to be an employer of choice, with great opportunities for career progression and to be part of a great team who are proud to serve Essex.

A great deal of research has been undertaken since our review of the 2019 campaign to understand the assessment approaches that other Service's are now using and what has worked well for them in terms of attracting the best people and building a more diverse workforce. We have revised and revised our end-to-end assessment and selection approaches, specifically removing tools which have resulted in larger deselection points for females and introducing tools which have been specifically developed for FRS' to use, and are therefore more relevant to the role of a firefighter, and which also significantly reduce bias; helping us to deliver on our strategic objective to build our diversity across the Service.

An overview of the selection approach is in diagram 3 below. Candidates are assessed at each stage and if successful will move onto the next stage. Candidates who have been successful at interview stage will move into our candidate pools.

**Diagram 3:**



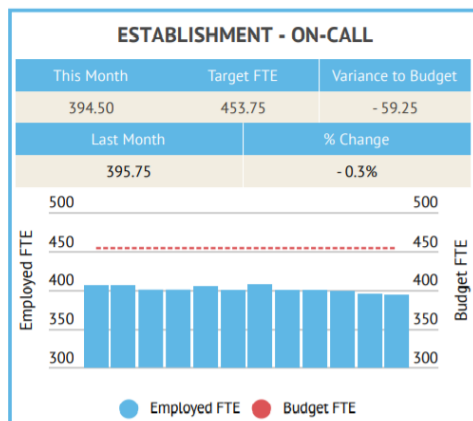
The campaign formally launches on 25 August and our plan is to onboard the first squad by December this year and continue to build our candidate pools for 2021 and the future.

This approach which underpins our Candidate Attraction Strategy, will be regularly reviewed and reports provided to SLT through the Quarterly People Reports. Our quarterly reports will also capture information on our candidate profiles and any action needed to improve our attraction and conversion rates.

### On-Call Recruitment and Retention

On call recruitment and retention and availability issues at some stations prevails. Our Q1 People Report evidences that we are effectively maintaining similar levels of FTE overall despite ongoing recruitment activity, as shown in diagram 4 below:

**Diagram 4:**



Since the *Interim Report* was submitted, two specific on-call workstreams have been created, one focusing specifically on recruitment and retention. The Programme Team,

Operations and HR have combined their efforts under this workstream to identify opportunities to explore and potentially trial different approaches, specifically at our priority stations which remain Canvey, Witham, Ingatestone, West Mersea, Ongar and Brentwood. We have now added Dovercourt to this list.

Over the next few months, we will be considering:

- Retainer payments
- Availability
- Contract types
- Leave

Work that spans across both workstreams (from an attraction and retention perspective) that we will consider is:

- Succession Planning
- Development
- Apprenticeships

All of the activities in these workstreams will support our strategy to improve retention and where we still have capacity issues the activities will deliver on our attraction strategy and commitments with the People Strategy in this respect.

Any recommendations will be submitted by the workstreams and considered by the On-Call Programme Board.

### **Leadership Development, Resourcing and Succession Planning**

Since the *interim plan* was submitted a significant amount of work has been undertaken to review and align our leadership development, resourcing and succession planning approaches to help us begin to take steps to closing both our capacity and capability gaps.

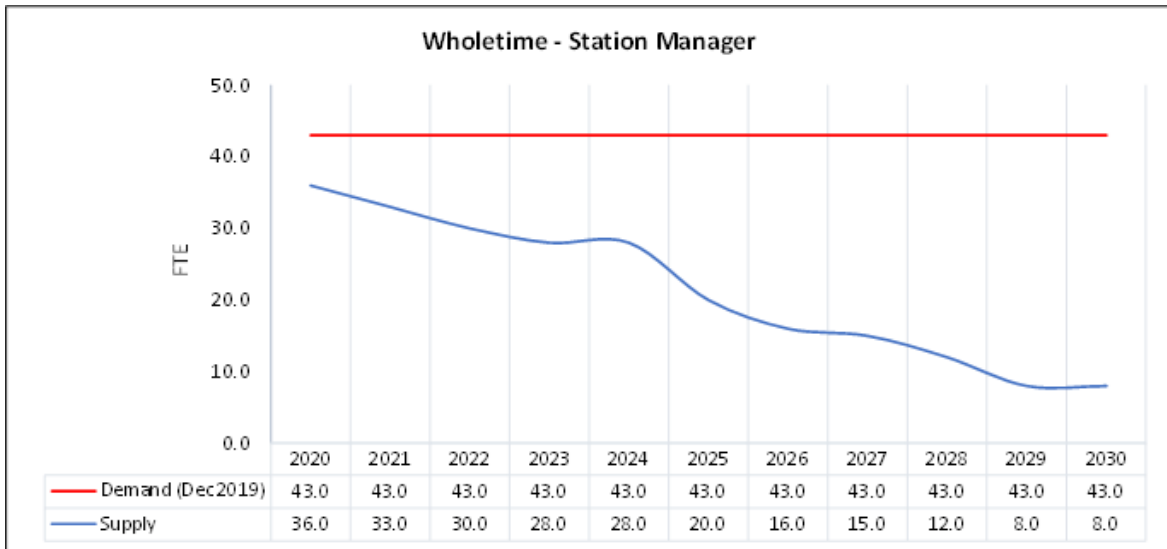
We have engaged with all key stakeholders including managers and trade union representatives and have adopted NFCC frameworks to underpin the development of our guiding principles, and to ensure fairness and consistency across our staff groups.

The review of our resource management arrangements is complete and work is now underway to begin to implement the new arrangements, endorsed by SLT in August 2020. This will be achieved in a phased way, working with Operations and other areas where we need to provide focus to achieve strength and depth; this will include Response, Prevention and Control Room teams as well as Fleet.

As well as substantive roles, succession planning will also include an evaluation of critical *additional* roles/skills, for example resources on the flexi-rota and 'singleton' statutory roles, for example S151 Officer.

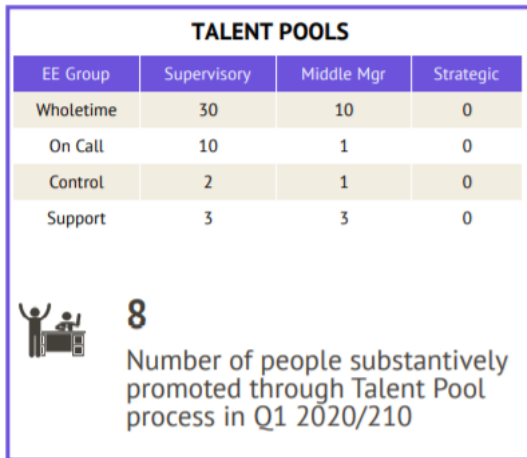
Since the *interim report* was produced we have looked at the workforce profile to 2030 and one of the most significant staff groups impacted by attrition is the Station Manager Group. Assuming normal retirement age and unplanned attrition at current rates, the profile of this group is concerning; the profile is shown in diagram 5 below:

**Diagram 5:**



During the first quarter of this financial year we have continued to successfully move people through our existing ‘talent pool’ process, and take steps towards closing the capacity gaps in Operations; diagram 6 below provides an overview of colleagues in the current ‘talent pool’ and those that progressed to the next role during this period.

**Diagram 6.**



Whilst we will be able to work towards closing this gap through effective succession planning and development of our existing operations colleagues, we will need to establish a recruitment plan as described in the *interim plan*. This may include Crew and Watch Managers as well as Station Managers. The plan will be derived from our resourcing and succession planning discussions and decisions over the remainder of this financial year. This will be managed through the governance arrangements that we put in place – please see the next section ‘what’s next?’- item 1. Governance. A ‘fast-track’ approach will also be critical to securing the right people, in the right place, at the right time – please see item 5 below.

# What's next?

The *interim* report set out a number of near, medium and long term activities and the update provided above gives a helicopter view of most of these elements in terms of what has been achieved and what activity will continue throughout this financial year 2020/21.

The activities that we said we would review in addition to these priorities and activities are as follows:

## 1. Governance

Establish suitable governance arrangements for all Resourcing and Succession management activity. This activity will be addressed as part of our Leadership Resourcing and Succession Planning implementation, however an outline of the arrangements that we intend to take forward is shown in diagram 7 below:

Diagram 7:

Data Flow , Actions and Decisions	Level	Review period / Method	Governance / Terms of Reference
	<b>Strategic</b>	Every 6 months • SLT Meeting	SLT are responsible for: • Ensuring plans are on schedule • The evaluation of the effectiveness of the plans / initiatives
	<b>Operational</b>	Quarterly • Workforce Plan Meeting • TAP Board* • SAS Board** Consider amalgamation of the above	Area Managers / Group Managers and equivalents are responsible for: • Identifying key issues and priorities, providing focus on the real resourcing risks • Weighing up alternative ways that issues could be addressed • Making decisions regarding the preferred options • Working with HR (and other areas) to implement initiatives
	<b>Tactical (day to day actions)</b>	Monthly Group / Area Meetings	Lead People Partners to attend meetings with different areas across the Service with responsibility for: • Implementation of the strategic decisions • Monitoring of the local impact and effectiveness • Escalation of any outstanding issues

\*Talent and Promotions Board    \*\*Succession and Secondments Board

## 2. Achieving agility

Through our review of processes and practice, specifically around recruitment, selection, succession planning and contracts we will identify ways in which we can work towards breaking down perceived barriers and providing enablers for our organisation to anticipate and adapt to changing organisational and workforce priorities. Our commitment to review our HR processes around resourcing are outlined in the People Strategy.

## 3. Career pathways

Our teams across Resourcing, Business Partnering, L&D and Training will work with leaders and managers to identify career pathways across the organisation and as part of our new resourcing and succession management arrangements. Work is already underway in Prevention to lead the way on this work, and the Finance Team have recently restructured with a view to creating more opportunity to build capability for the longer term.



#### **4. Retirements and pension remedy**

Our understanding is that we can expect more news on this in the next couple of months. We will need to respond quickly to any potential impacts and in readiness for this, HR will set out some potential outcomes and options for SLT to consider.

#### **5. Future Leaders Programme**

Some work has been done to explore the potential of establishing a Future Leaders Programme which will provide focused on-the-job and other development activity to help ensure that we have a cadre of qualified, trained and experienced leaders when we need them.

The Future Leaders Programme (working title) could be an accelerated, work-based training programme, that allows those with a specific level of qualifications and / or relevant management / leadership experience, who have demonstrated potential through a rigorous selection process, to progress to the role of Station Manager in reduced timescales.

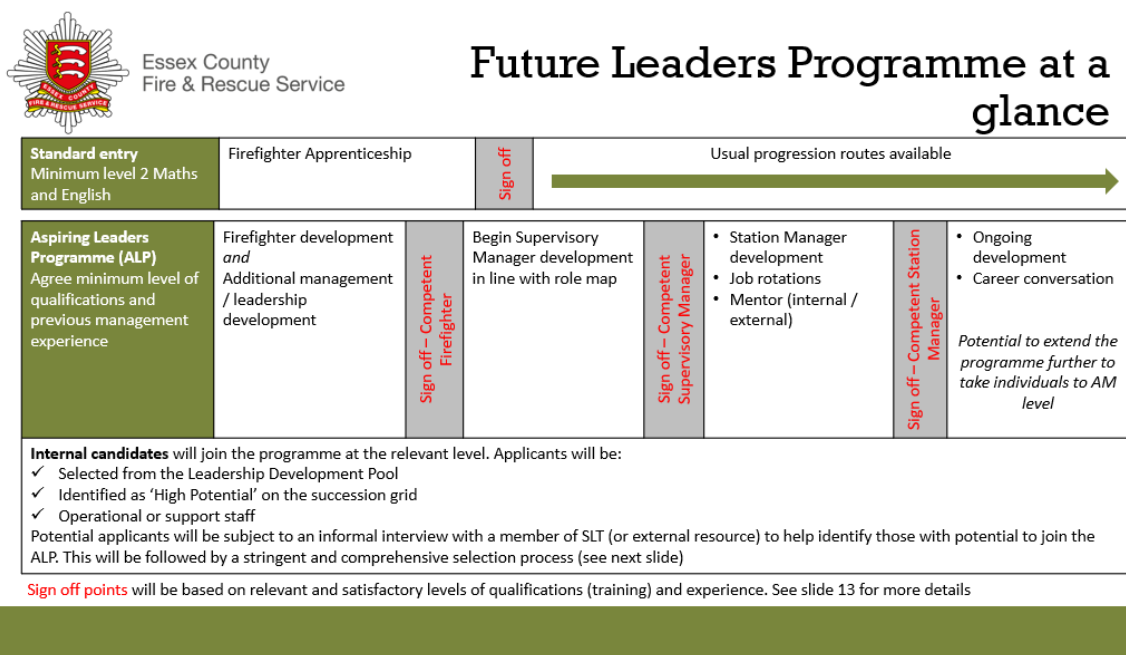
We envisage that it will be available to internal and external applicants. We will look for applicants who share our vision and who would have a positive impact and influence on the management and culture of our Service:

Attributes could include:

- Ambitious with drive and determination to take advantage of every opportunity
- Passionate about their own development, constantly striving to better understand their role and the wider Service
- Capability to bring new ways of thinking, diversity of thought and experience
- High levels of personal integrity
- Flexible transformational leadership skills
- Resilience and positivity
- Creativity and innovation
- Political astuteness

The programme would enable individuals to determine the right career path for them, whilst giving the essential expertise to get there. An overview of what the programme could look like is in diagram 8 below.

Diagram 8.



SLT have agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to build on this research and engagement to date, with a view to the Group making recommendations to SLT to endorse.

### 6. Building external resource pipelines

7. The Whole Time Firefighter candidate pipeline will be established through the recruitment campaign approach that we have adopted this year. We will build on this through outreach work as part of our positive recruitment programme and also through the establishment of a facility to register interest for any future Service opportunities via our careers website. It is expected that a suitable recruitment/applicant tracking system (ATS) will enable us to achieve this.

### 8. Market supplements, additional responsibilities and other allowances

Work has been undertaken with Managers, Finance, and the People Business Partnering Team to review additional payments and the reasons for these. A majority of cases are now resolved or being addressed through job evaluation and/or restructuring activity that is complete or underway. We have recently reviewed our Job Evaluation process in consultation with Unison and expect to implement the new arrangements in the coming weeks. The process has been simplified and should enable us to respond to emergent resourcing issues in a more agile way. However, more work needs to be done to review evaluated and non-evaluated roles to ensure consistency, as this does potentially impact on our ability to recruit and retain our people.

## 9. Secondary Contracts

Work is underway to consider the number of secondary contracts we have and to identify smarter ways of utilising our resources whilst ensuring that we are taking sufficient steps to manage working time. This package of work will be progressed in part through the review of contracts and also through a root and branch review of resource needs and usage.

## 10. Make/Buy/Reduce

We have recently reviewed the Authorisation to Recruit form and approvals and this is working well, giving People Business Partners the authority to work with managers to consider how a resourcing need can be met: whether it is short term and procured through agency or a contract for services; through 'make' in terms of development, secondment, apprenticeship, recruitment; or reduce – that there is an opportunity for efficiency savings through the redistribution of work in teams, what work can be stopped, and what might be achieved more efficiently. There is a further opportunity for Finance and HR to work more closely with managers to understand their resourcing needs and how this is best sourced through the budget setting process; plans are in place to achieve this from September this year.

## 11. Apprenticeships

ECFRS became trailblazers for the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Framework, with our first group starting in January 2019. Our current squads of Apprentices in training (and up to the end of 2020) is as follows:

Squad	Number in squad	Anticipated completion date
01/19	11	02/21
05/19	6	06/21
10/19	18	11/21
02/20	16	03/22
05/20	5	06/22
09/20	12	10/22
12/20	18	01/23
<b>Total to end 2020</b>	<b>92</b>	

There is also now an on-call firefighter apprenticeship in place which some other Services have introduced which ECFRS may wish to consider. Whilst we have some apprenticeships in our support areas, more consideration should be given to the use of apprenticeships in these areas including degree apprenticeships. A separate paper will be submitted to SLT in this respect.

## **12. Capability**

The focus of our workforce plan this year has been on capacity rather than capability. It is our intention to look closer at the performance of our teams in order to understand where we may need to take positive action in the next iteration of the plan.

## **13. Investment**

In the *interim report* investment was highlighted as a probability in terms of resourcing effort required to support various workstreams. We will identify the resources required to support our programme of work and submit a separate business case to SLT for consideration. We expect this business case to be submitted by the end of September 2020.

## **14. Updates and Annual Workforce Plan**

We will report progress on this plan to the SLT in December 2020 and through quarterly People Reports as appropriate. We will produce an annual workforce plan for 2021 for SLT consideration in March 2021.

**Appendix 1**

**Essex County Fire and Rescue Services**

# **Strategic Workforce Plan 2020**

**Interim Report – April 2020**



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# Introduction

## Purpose of this Workforce Plan

The purpose of this Workforce Plan is to clearly identify any gaps in our workforce profiles, and propose a strategy for mitigating this; to ensure that ECFRS has an adequate supply of people with the skills, knowledge and experience required to achieve its strategic objectives efficiently and effectively, both in the short and long term.

The Plan will facilitate the process of agreeing workforce strategies that directly link to the strategic objectives of the Service, focusing on the major issues and identifying how to convert the workforce challenges into action, linking long term planning into day-to-day activities

The Workforce Plan cannot exist in isolation, and the approach we have taken builds links between workforce planning, recruitment, recruitment, resourcing, career pathways and development, providing an integrated and flexible approach, grounded in the overall organisational context.

## Duration covered and review period

This interim plan covers the period 2020 to 2025 to enable the Service to put in place medium to long term

interventions that will mitigate the impact of planned and unplanned workforce attrition. The full plan will be submitted to the Service Leadership Team by Summer 2020. This full plan will be reviewed periodically with robust governance arrangements.

The following governance framework has been developed and will be set out in detail in the full report, ensuring that it ties into existing resourcing activities:

Level	Review period / Method	Governance / Terms of Reference
Strategic	<b>Every 6 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SLT Meeting</li> </ul>	SLT are responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring the Plan is on schedule</li> <li>The evaluation of the effectiveness of the Plan</li> </ul>
Operational	<b>Quarterly</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Plan Meeting</li> <li>TAP Board*</li> <li>SAS Board**</li> </ul> Once the different meetings are embedded we will look to streamline / amalgamate	Area Managers / Group Managers / equivalents are responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying key issues and priorities, providing focus on the real resourcing risks</li> <li>Weighing up alternative ways issues could be addressed</li> <li>Making decisions regarding the preferred options</li> <li>Working with HR (and other areas) to implement initiatives</li> </ul>
Tactical (day to day actions)	<b>Monthly</b> Group / Area Meetings	HRBPs to attend meetings with different areas across the Service, with responsibility for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the strategic decisions</li> <li>Monitoring of the local impact and effectiveness</li> <li>Escalation of any outstanding issues</li> </ul>

\*Talent and Promotions Board

\*\*Succession and Secondments Board

We have assumed a high touch for operational roles, with a lighter touch for enabling functions as our data shows us that greatest demand will be within our frontline service, with our enabling functions having a reasonably low turnover, and relatively straight forward in current labour market conditions to recruit to.

### **Plan ownership**

The Workforce Plan and resulting actions are determined and owned by the respective areas within the Service, with HR acting as enablers, developing a sense of collective ownership of the strategic importance for workforce change.

### **Position Update**

At the time of publishing this interim plan the UK is managing the Coronavirus pandemic and the impacts of this, not least from a workforce planning perspective, are unknown. This interim plan has been submitted to the Service Leadership Team to ensure that we continue to put arrangements in place to resource our critical operational capability. The Plan will be updated later in 2020 when the situation is stabilised; it is expected that this will be the Summer of 2020.



# Executive Summary

## Summary Overview of the Workforce

The following provides a brief summary of our workforce position which captures the essence of the focus of this interim workforce plan.

The Service has a significant shortfall of future operational middle managers and roles at Group and Area Manager level.

Turnover in the Control Room is very low and the establishment for that area is fully populated. However, there are some working pattern issues that are impacting the team.

The impacts of any potential move for Fleet and Stores at Lexden are not covered in this interim report, although it is recognised that this is a workforce planning activity that requires further consideration in the context of the market conditions and a potential move to Boreham.

Following successful recruitment in 2019, the Technical Fire Safety team is currently adequately resourced from a capacity perspective, although it is recognised that there may be some further interventions required to develop and strengthen our capability.

There are no significant or major capacity issues identified in functional/corporate support areas.

The focus over the next six months will therefore be to focus on operational recruitment and resource management activities to ensure that we do not lose momentum on the workforce strategy set out in this plan: to continue to close the significant gap in operational capacity, specifically crew, watch and station managers.

**The following provides a summary of the recommendations contained in this report for Service Leadership Team consideration and agreement. (The full details are contained later in this report.)**

## Recommendations

The key recommendations to address our capacity shortfalls and risks in the near to medium term, recognising that our focus for now needs to be in the area of operations, specifically whole time and on-call firefighters, are as follows:

### *Near Term*

1. Continue with the Whole Time Squads for April and October utilising the 2019 successful candidates and a recruitment campaign that we will run in the summer of 2020. We will take every opportunity to ensure that these groups reflect an improved diversity

2. Commence a recruitment campaign in May/June to create an external candidate pool which we can tap into to ensure that the October squad places are fully optimised and that we have a pool of candidates that we can tap into in 2020 to ensure we meet our workforce plan needs.
3. We will review our assessment and selection methodology ensure that we attract, assess and onboard a diverse workforce.
4. Continue with on-call recruitment with a focus on recruiting to the priority stations: Canvey, Witham, Ingatestone, West Mersea, Ongar and Brentwood.
5. We will also review and update our assessment and selection arrangements for all call candidates and explore new ways in which to extend our reach to new potential candidates including utilisation of existing employees, linking with employers and partner organisations.
6. We will ensure that we engage with equality and diversity experts and colleagues who can support our efforts to improve the diversity of our workforce. This will include developments in our attraction strategy through to onboarding and the employment lifecycle.

7. A detailed recruitment plan will be compiled for 2020 in respect of operational staff in lined with the recommendations in this interim workforce plan.

#### *Medium Term*

1. Continue to recruit whole time and on-call firefighters such that internal talent pipelines remain available; this will include establishing squads for 2021 and continuing to find innovative ways in which we continuously improve our conversion rates from initial attraction to successful appointment.
2. In line with the People Strategy 2020-24 to ensure that our assessment and selection approaches attract and enable us to successfully recruit and onboard a diverse candidate pool.
3. Establish the new Talent Management arrangements in place to enable the necessary volume of talent required to populate our development pools and 'ready now' succession plans

#### *Long Term*

This interim plan will be updated later in 2020 with long term workforce interventions which will address key resourcing issues – how we make, what we buy and how we achieve an agile approach to ensure that our workforce has the right skills when we need them, and where they are needed.

Our People Strategy and associated Action Plans will form the foundation of our approaches in all aspects of the workforce plan initiatives and developments.

These recommendations are derived from the workforce profile section of this report – more detail can be found in that section.

# Background

Strategic Workforce Planning is fundamental to ensuring that the Service has the right skills and capability now and for the future and that the resourcing arrangements are cost effective. To achieve this, we need strong links across our organisation's functions to facilitate the implementation of people plans and activities across the Service using 'one source of the truth' for all our workforce profiling and reporting activities.

Whilst developing this Plan, we have considered the following inputs and insights:

## **Fire and Rescue Plan Priorities**

Our workforce plans and interventions will enable the service to deliver its mission and strategic objectives, particularly:

- Developing and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service
- Collaborating with our partners
- Make best use of our resources

As we develop our resourcing and talent management arrangements outlined in the People Strategy 2020-24, we will take the opportunity to do more in these areas, including using talent management approaches to provide opportunity for our people to develop and broaden their skills.

We are already working collaboratively with the Police and have developed strong networks with the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and other Fire and Rescue Services. More recently we have secured a single supplier agency worker contract with the Seven Police Forces and are working to develop priority people policies for adoption and/or adaption.

Our approach to technology is rapidly changing, with more focus on digital-first solutions to help us to achieve more efficient outcomes which put people at the centre and make the best use of our resources.

Our workforce plans will develop over time to help us to build our capability and capacity to ensure that we deliver our organisational objectives and make Essex a safer place to live, work and travel.

## **HMICFRS Feedback**

The HMICFRS Inspection in 2019 recognised that the Service predicts retirements and movement of operational staff quarterly, helping to predict shortages in operational cover. They also highlighted that detailed six-monthly workforce planning reports are given to the SLT, helping to plan recruitment, training and promotions.

However, it was reported that there is a lack of effective Workforce Planning in some critical areas. For example, Technical Fire Safety (some steps have been taking to

address the issues in this area since the visit of HMI, however there is more to do).

HMI also flagged the issue around the number and availability of on-call staff, commenting that the service doesn't have enough on-call staff in some stations and these are regularly unavailable to respond. The Workforce Plan will provide a spotlight for these issues and will help the Service identify and focus on the real resourcing risks.

### **Employee engagement feedback**

The relevant feedback from staff interviews carried out by Real World HR as part of the Everyone Matters initiative in 2019 included the recommendation that the Service should communicate strategic workforce plans to allay fears on planned capacity issues. This was gathered from the following summary comments:

- Concerns that there are a lot of temporary postings in the wholetime service. Posts are reserved for on-call conversions wholetime crews, but there is uncertainty over timelines.
- Some concerns that there are not enough wholetime recruits coming through to replace predicted retirements.
- Whether the Service has a plan for the potential impact on the retirement profile from the national fire-fighters pension case.

This document aims to address these points and focuses on the planning and resourcing of operational positions and the

mitigations that need to be put in place to reduce the potential impact of planned and unplanned retirements.

### **People Strategy Commitments: Resourcing and Talent**

Our People Strategy 2020-2024 sets out our commitment to ensuring that we have the right people and skills to deliver the best service to our communities in Essex.

The People Strategy commits to achieving this by ensuring that:

- Resourcing challenges are addressed in critical areas and that the Service is efficiently staffed, developing a strategic Workforce Plan to predict demand and enable us to attract and retain the best candidates with the right capabilities to succeed in the roles.
- Arrangements are put in place which will facilitate direct entry and fast track development and progression
- We design and develop internal and external talent pipelines, including work experience, interns, apprentices, and community placements alongside experienced internal and external candidates.

## Recruitment and Diversity

### Current Profile

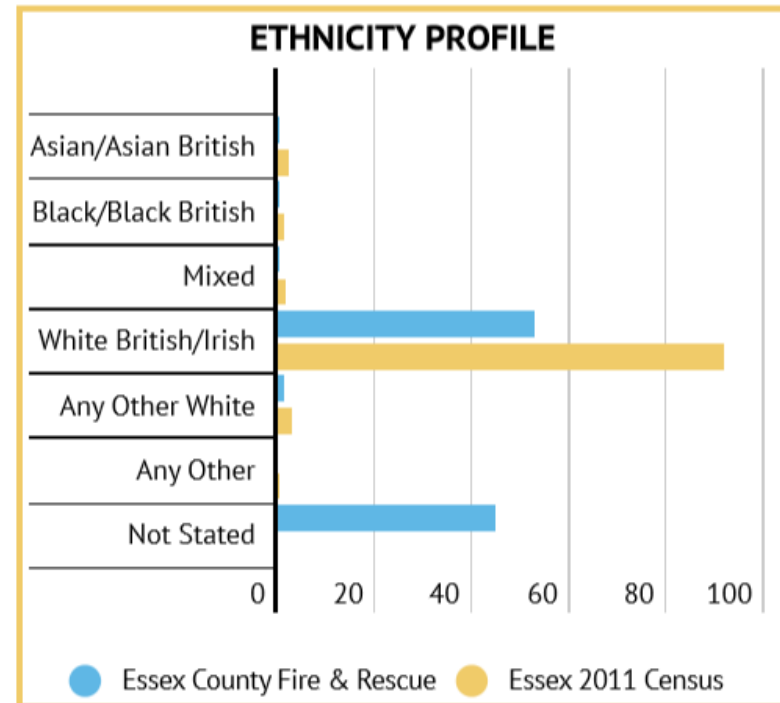
The following graph provides an overview of our gender profile and provides a national comparison, as at January 2020.

GENDER PROFILE					
EE Group	Female	Male	Other	Essex %	National %
Operational	40	547	9	6.7%	6.8%
On Call	7	440	1	1.6%	5.6%
Control	30	6	0	83.3%	77.0%
Support	153	141	2	51.7%	53.2%

Notes:  
 The "Other" grouping includes employees that identify as Non-Binary, Other or Prefer Not to Say.  
 Essex % and National % compare the ECFRS % female employees with national fire service % female staff levels.

Whilst we are broadly comparable to the national picture, there is still more we need to do.

In respect of ethnicity profile, nearly half of our employees have not stated and just over half are white British/Irish; this is reflected in the following graph:



We continue to reach out to our people to encourage them to update their records to improve this picture, so we have a more accurate view of our workforce diversity. We will ensure that this data is collected via our Civica applicant tracking system as part of the application process in the future.

## Whole Time Recruitment Campaign 2019

The 2019 whole-time recruitment campaign was successful in that all the positions were appointed to with a high-quality cadre of candidates, however of the 109 females who initially registered and applied, only two were successful and offered positions. There were more ‘successful candidates\*’ than positions available and these have been held on a reserve list/talent pool. This includes two females. We have been using this pool to ensure that the planned squads are optimised.

A lessons learned exercise was undertaken shortly after the campaign with those involved and other key stakeholders including our specialist diversity lead. Further work has been done to explore what other Services have done and are successfully doing to attract, assess, select and on-board a more diverse workforce.

These rich sources of information will be used to build our approach over the coming weeks, and we will continue to involve specialist colleagues and with these developments and engage with internal diversity groups.

More detail around our review of the attraction, assessment and selection methodology can be found later in this report, in the ‘Resourcing Interventions’ section.

## Current workforce profile

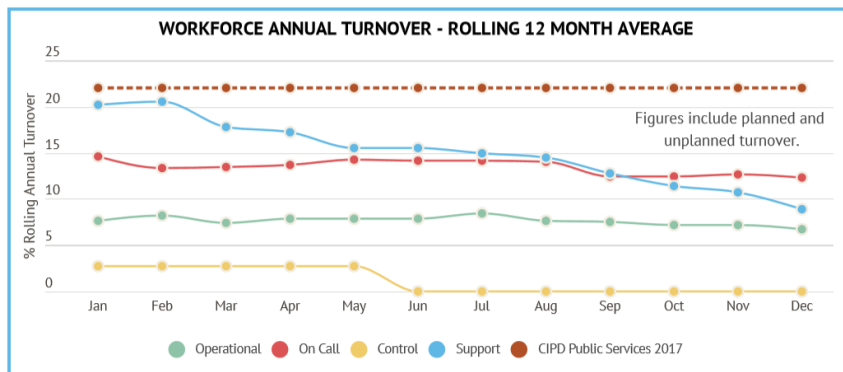
The following provides an overview of the Service’s workforce profile as at January 2020 (this is the date that the workforce profiles contained throughout this document were run):



These graphs reflect the shortfall in operational roles compared to Control Room and Support staff. This capacity

gap will continue to grow if we do not take immediate and ongoing action to continue to recruit and train.

The following graphic shows the annual turnover of our work groups with operation at around at least 5% including planned and unplanned attrition. Whilst this is below the national average in Public Services, the lead time and investment in our operational staff is likely to be more challenging than general recruitment across the public sector where workers are more likely to be suitably qualified and experienced for the roles they apply for.



### Resourcing Activity

Prior to 2018, the last wholetime squad was recruited in 2009. This has resulted in a lack of movement and progression across our operational teams, resulting in some significant shortfalls in our pipelines, particularly in our middle management and senior roles.

The most recent whole-time campaign in 2019 was successful in that of the 1200 applications received 54 appointments were made and a reserve list of appointable candidates – an external talent pool - has been created that will make up a future squad.

Whilst the campaign attracted a good number of quality candidates, the diversity of applications was extremely limited. Of the 109 applications received from females, only three appointments were made. No disabilities were declared by the successful applicants, and ethnicity declared was low throughout the process. The reserve list contains one female candidate and a candidate who has declared a disability. Our plans, contained within the People Strategy, are to review our assessment and selection methodologies before we invest in the next recruitment campaign for whole-time employees.

There has been limited interest and attraction for some of our external applications for qualified and experienced positions, particularly for Operational Policy roles. These have been advertised on several occasions. We plan to take a closer look at our talent attraction strategies and build our employer proposition through the introduction of external talent pools, development of promotional materials and better use of job boards, networks and social media.

Since 2004, the internal promotion process has been subject to many changes. The National ADC process was followed for a short time and then ECFRS moved to a range of internal processes devised by senior managers across the Service. In 2013, an interim process was put in place, resulting in several



temporary appointments until the introduction of a full assessment centre / Talent Pool process in 2017 which has been very successful to date.

### **Previous Workforce Plan**

Until now a Workforce Planning Report has been provided to SLT every 6 months, with the most recent versions submitted in Jan 2019 and July 2019.

The previous workforce plans have enabled us to focus on the recruitment campaigns required to address our shortfalls and help to build potential talent pools for the future.

This interim workforce plan builds upon this experience and is intended to begin to set the strategic direction of travel for all our medium to long term resourcing requirements. The full workforce plan, which will be published later this year, will consider a wider range of strategic resourcing issues and recommended interventions. An outline of the resourcing issues to be considered are set out in the resourcing interventions section of this plan.

### **Development of this workforce plan**

Several strategic workforce planning sessions have been held with senior leaders across the Service, to share the current workforce profile, along with the predictions for the next 5 years. These sessions have built an understanding of the need for long-term resourcing plans and a people strategy.

This has developed a collective ownership of the strategic importance for workforce change, through incremental build to gain momentum.

# Workforce Profiles

This section captures the workforce profiles for operational staff as at January 2020 and includes an overview of the key resourcing issues which will require some type of resourcing intervention.

A more detailed review of all staff group profiles and potential 'pinch points', for example geographical impacts, will be included in the full workforce plan report later this year.

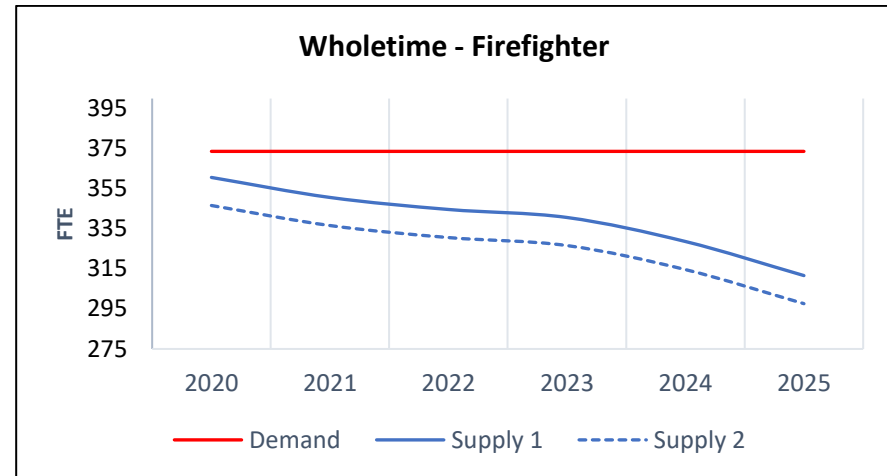
## OPERATIONS - WHOLE TIME EMPLOYEES

### Whole Time Firefighters

The current establishment for whole time firefighters is 374 and 360 FTE are currently\* in post against these positions.

(\*as at January 2020)

Assuming the establishment (demand) remains the same through to 2025, with no resourcing interventions there could be nearly 80 vacant positions. The delta between supply and demand for this group of employees is shown in the following graph:

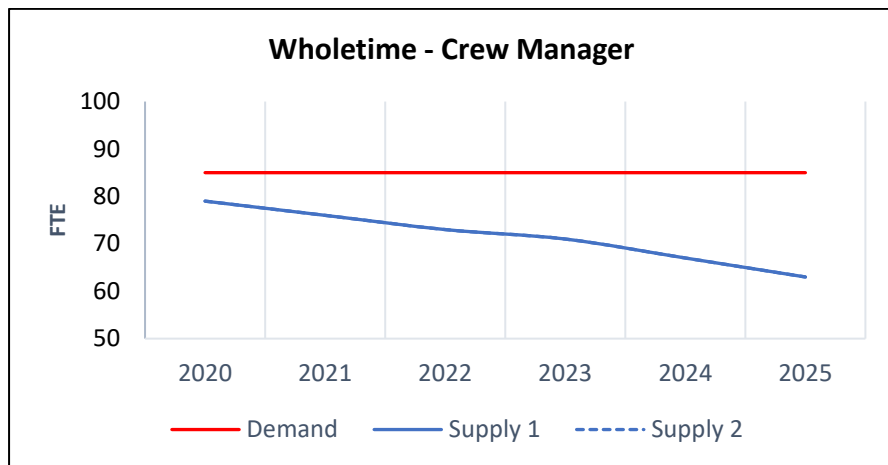


Note: The solid blue line 'supply 1' is the supply of current staff 'planned' attrition assuming normal retirement dates – these will of course vary. The dotted blue line shows the impact of unplanned attrition through resignation using attrition trends from this workforce group.

### Whole Time Crew Managers

The current establishment for whole time Crew Managers is 85 and 79 FTE are currently in post against these positions.

Assuming the establishment (demand) remains the same through to 2025, with no resourcing interventions there could be nearly 20 vacant positions. The delta between supply and demand for this group of employees is shown in the following graph:

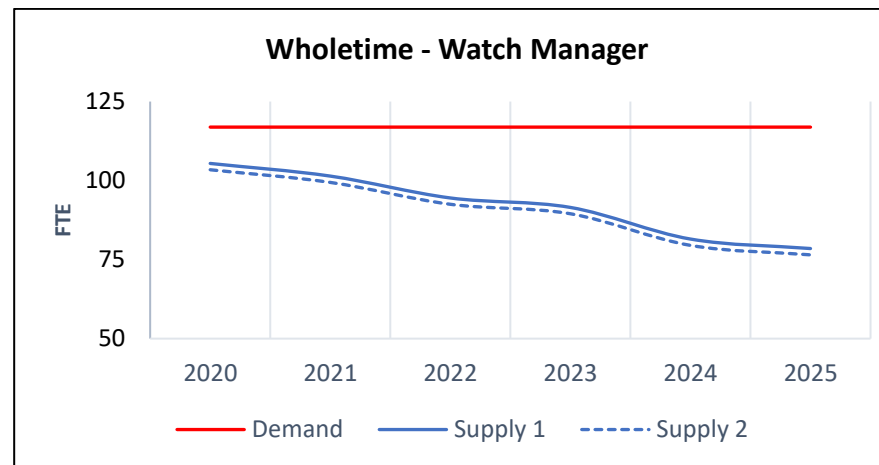


The unplanned attrition for this group of staff is low; the graph reflects this with turnover being nearly wholly attributed to age retirement.

### Whole Time Watch Managers

The current establishment for whole time Watch Managers is 117 and 104 FTE are currently in post against these positions.

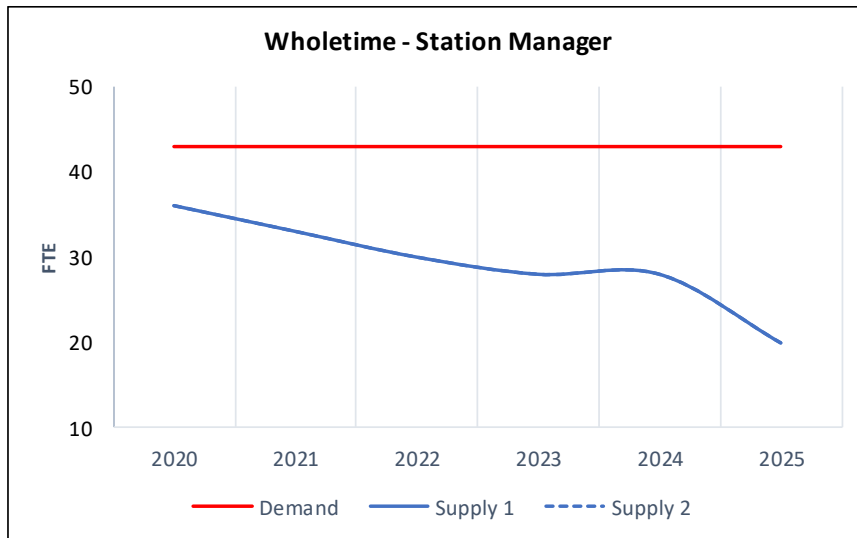
Assuming the establishment (demand) remains the same through to 2025, with no resourcing interventions there could be nearly 40 vacant positions. The delta between supply and demand for this group of employees is shown in the following graph:



### Whole Time Station Managers

The current establishment for whole time Station Managers is 43 and 36 FTE are currently in post against these positions.

Assuming the establishment (demand) remains the same through to 2025, with no resourcing interventions there could be nearly 20 vacant positions. The delta between supply and demand for this group of employees is shown in the following graph:



The planned and unplanned attrition rates are stark in this staff group and may be further impacted by the recent pensions remedy.

In December 2018 the Court of Appeal found that the transitional protections unlawfully discriminated on age and the case was returned to the Employment Tribunal for it to determine remedy. The Order anticipates that the final determination on that remedy issue in regards to membership of the 1992 FPS should be resolved around mid-July 2020, although it should be noted that even when there is a final determination on that issue it may be some time before this part of the remedy can be put into effect for all claimants. FRAs are awaiting guidance on implementation from the Home Office covering the following points:

- Dealing with ill-health retirements, including on the IQMP process
- Backdated employee contributions
- Taper members due to taper into the 1992 scheme from 21 January 2020
- Immediate normal retirements from age 50 with over 25 years of service

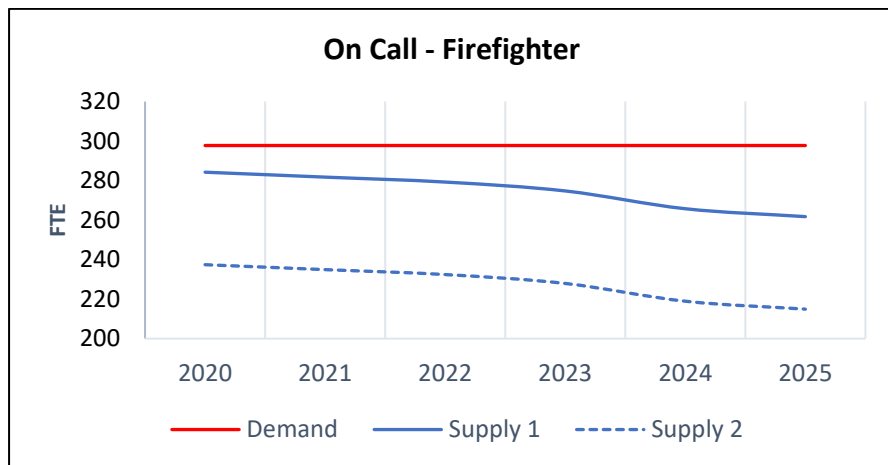
Pending this guidance, Circular EMP/8/19 advises FRAs should take no immediate steps.

## **OPERATIONS - ON CALL EMPLOYEES**

### **On Call Firefighters**

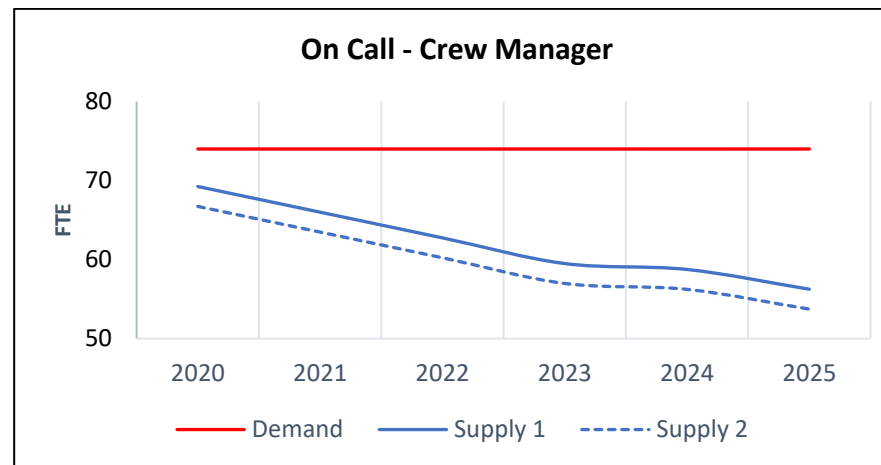
The current establishment for on call firefighters is 298 and 284 FTE are currently in post against these positions.

Assuming the establishment (demand) remains the same through to 2025, with no resourcing interventions there could be nearly 60 vacant posts. The delta between supply and demand for this group of employees is shown in the following graph:



As the graph reflects unplanned turnover in this employee group is high. On call firefighters also apply for whole time firefighter positions and this causes further resourcing challenges and impacts on appliance availability.

The following two graphs for on-call Crew Managers and Watch Managers also shows a significant potential capacity gap which we will need to address through continued targeted recruitment campaigns and focussed talent management interventions including succession planning to stimulate development activity to boost our talent pipelines into these roles.



### Control Room

The turnover in this work group is negligible and given that the age profile is an average of 41.6 in the function, there are no

major expected capacity gaps from an establishment/vacancy perspective. However, the various working patterns of this staff group may be impacting on the capacity of the team to provide adequate cover which will need to be considered in the medium term.

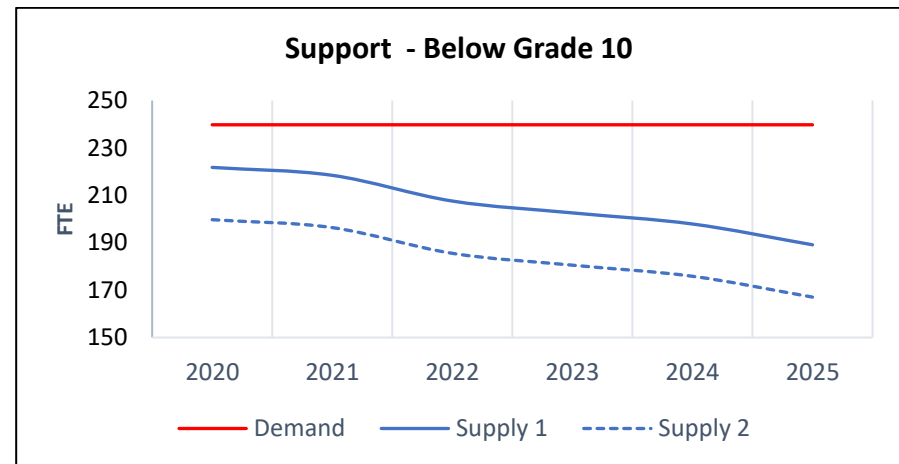
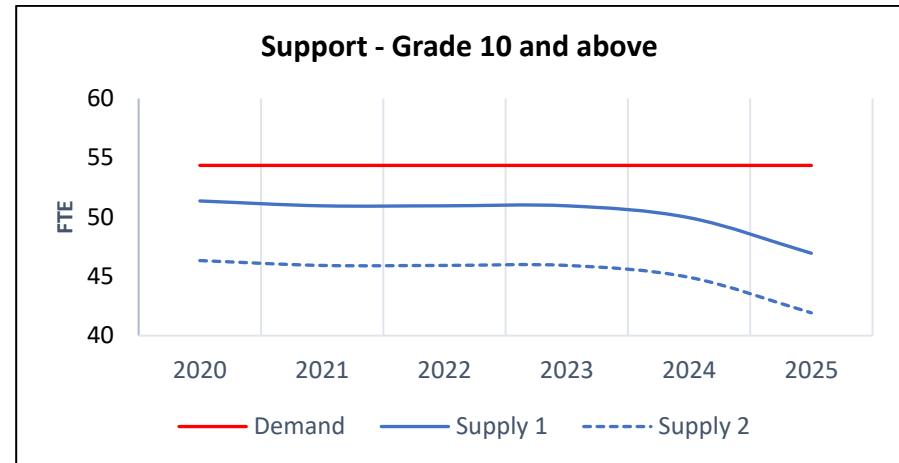
### **Support Staff**

For the purpose of this interim report, we have looked at the attrition for support staff two levels, grade 10 and above, and below grade 10. Both graphs below show that we have a small shortfall currently (excluding agency workers) and that unplanned attrition may impact if it remains at the same rate as the rolling 12 months.

The average age in Support functions roles below Grade 10 is 47.2, in Support functions Grade 10+ is 49.0.

Unplanned turnover of support staff is not a concern compared to the national average for the public sector.

Our experience of external recruitment into functional roles has been good, although we will need to establish clear career pathways and robust succession plans to mitigate any potential changes in the local labour market.



The following Support functions showed turnover levels in excess of 20% during calendar year 2019. (Average headcount figures for context).

Cost Centre	Support < Grade 10		Support Grade 10+	
	Turnover	Average Headcount	Turnover	Average Headcount
Corporate Comms			29%	3.5
Health & Safety	33%	3		
Performance & Data	25%	8	29%	3.5
Property Services	21%	9.5		
Training	26%	11.5	67%	1.5
Water Services	27%	7.5		

The following table gives an overview of the number of market supplements that we currently have in place for support staff, which is considerable.

In the full workforce report we will review the reasons for this and any recommendations to reduce these, including consideration of consolidating the payment where the job evaluation outcome falls short of the market forces.

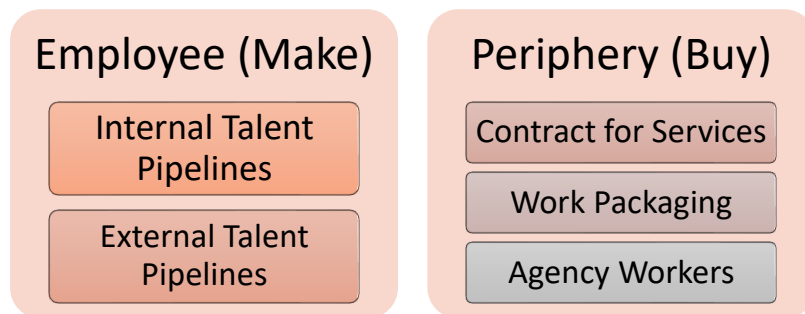
Cost Centre	Number of role holders in receipt of Market Supplement
Health & Safety	2
Human Resources	2
ICT	6
Innovation & Change	7
Property Services	5
Service Leadership Team	1
Technical Fire Safety	17
Workshop Engineering	21
Workshops Management	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>

# Resourcing Interventions

The following section focuses on the employee groups where we will need to put in place near term and medium-term resourcing activities in place to attract and develop people.

The full strategic workforce plan will introduce the concept of 'make' and 'buy' and consider these within the context of making best use of the resources available to us.

In the meantime, the following graphic provides an overview of the context, and a strategic approach which should enable us to focus on our core workforce and develop strategies for our peripheral workforce to create more flexible resources.



Recently a Talent Management proposal was submitted to the Senior Leadership Team which set out new arrangements for

identifying, developing and promoting both internal and external talent pipelines.

The full workforce report will include more detailed proposals on how we will manage our new arrangements including:

**Internal talent:** talent management: career pathways, development, succession, career progression

**External talent:** work experience, interns, apprenticeships, public service students, cadets, social care leavers, qualified and experienced candidates, targeted recruitment programmes (e.g. WT)

This interim report focusses on the critical operational capacity shortfalls, specifically whole time and on-call employees and the recruitment and talent management activity necessary to address these.

We must continue to recruit and develop these staff groups with the necessary pace to address current gaps and get ahead of the curve as quickly as we can given the lead time it takes to achieve the necessary qualifications, skills and experience.

The next section of this plan provides an overview of each of these employee groups, the capacity deltas and the action necessary through recruitment and internal talent management to address these. This section of the Workforce Plan informs our recruitment and talent pipeline plans for the next five years. Detailed plans will be developed and published for the near term – i.e. 2020 and 2021, subject to



the recommendations made in this report being endorsed by the Service Leadership team.

## WHOLE TIME STATION POSITIONS

### Whole Time Fire Fighters

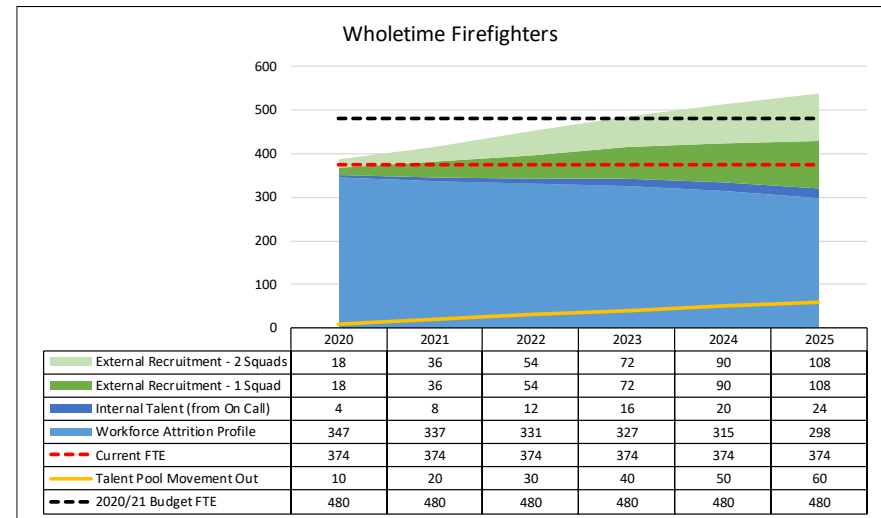
Current capacity:

The current capacity of Whole Time Fire Fighters is below the budgeted establishment. Whilst unplanned attrition is low by 2023 the assumed volume of retirements will be impactful if we do not continue to recruit each year.

During 2019/20 54 candidates, making up four squads, were appointed from external recruitment and successful on-call firefighter candidates.

The on-call appointments did impact some stations' availability, and the appointments made overall did not reflect the level of diversity that we expected.

The following graph reflects the level of internal and external resourcing activity required to ensure we meet demand in the future. This includes new recruits necessary to close the existing resource gap, close the gap on planned and unplanned attrition and allow for the development and transfer of employees to crew manager:



Note: The graph reflects the position at the end of each calendar year.

The graph allows for ~10 suitably qualified and experienced firefighters to progress to the next role as Crew Manager each year via the talent management process.

It assumes 108 new recruits over the five-year period, and 4 on-call talent pipeline appointments to whole time per year. For the purpose of the near term resourcing activities it is proposed that the April 2020 and October squads continue as planned; and that arrangements are put in place to create an external talent pool for 2021; the proposed interventions are set out below

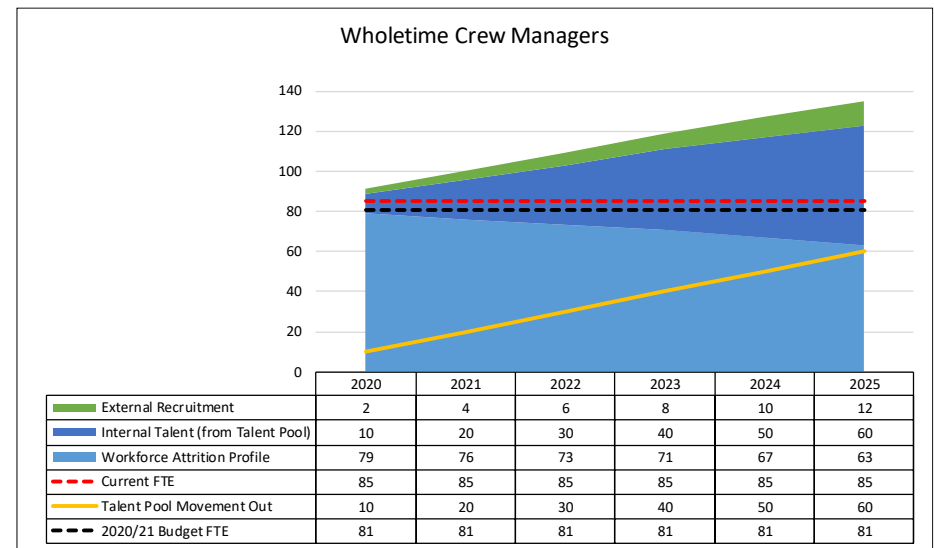
## Interventions:

We have taken account of our recent recruitment experience and propose that we will:

- Review our recruitment and assessment/selection approach and methodologies to ensure that we attract and on-board more diverse squads, considering that we will need to assess against two criteria: career firefighters and fast track. Specifically we will adopt and adapt the experiences of other fire services including: only undertaking verbal and numerical reasoning tests where the candidate does not have GCSE or equivalent in Maths and English; introduce a scenario based on line assessment tool; ensure that the physical assessment exercises are fit for purpose and taken 'in the round' of assessment where feasible;
- Separate on-call recruitment to whole time through a talent management process.
- Create an external talent pipeline of new recruits through college networks, specifically: those colleges that run certificated public services programmes (Colchester Institute, South Essex and Chelmsford); Fire Cadets; the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) (the Ministry of Defence working with their outplacement partner); exploration of other pipelines of diverse potential candidates. These candidates will create a pool for potential slots in the October 2020 squad, and squads planned for 2021.

## Crew Managers

Assuming that ~10 firefighters are successfully identified, developed and promoted to Crew Manager each year, these will need to be factored into the Watch Manager workforce profiles, as reflected in the following graphs:



This profile also allows for ~10 suitably qualified and experienced Crew Managers to progress to the next role of Watch Manager each year via the talent management process.

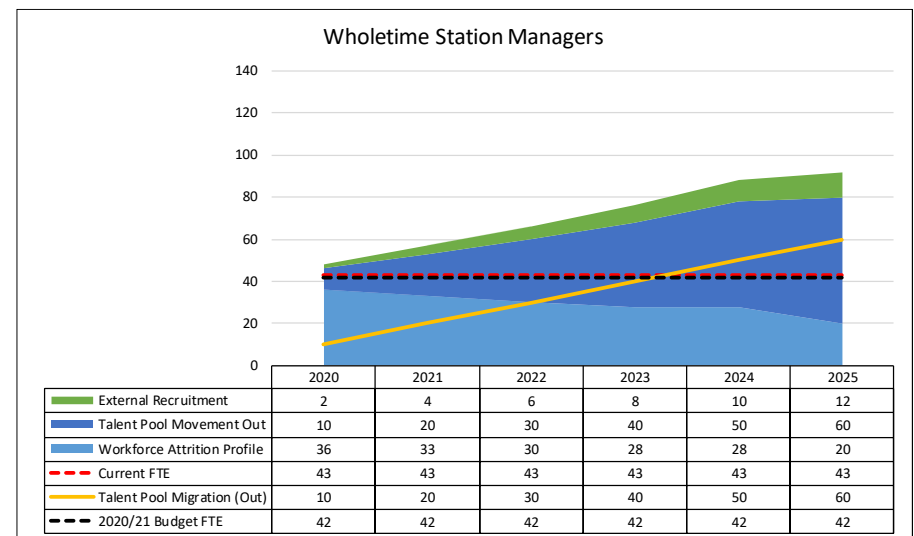
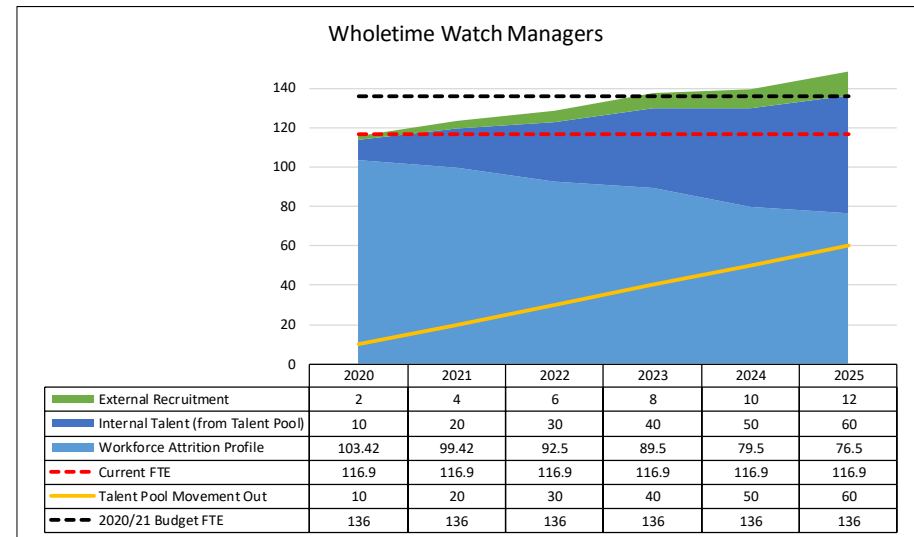
It also assumes 10 'pipeline appointments' from existing whole-time fire fighter positions and 2 external suitably

qualified and experienced candidates to be appointed each year. These numbers are considered realistic but can be flexible depending on the internal and external conditions and impacts.

### Watch Managers and Station Managers

The following profiles for Watch Managers and Station Managers build on this concept of resourcing through a mix of external recruitment and internal development and progression and shows the necessary flow through of through of people in these roles to achieve the required resource levels.

The impact of this investment of additional resources above the demand curve to allow for development lead time and facilitate movement.



The interim resourcing recommendations included in the Executive summary will enable us to maintain momentum for the longer-term interventions rather than lose any valuable time building our capacity and capability. We therefore propose to:

- Continue to recruit whole time firefighters, including progressing the April 2020 and October squads as planned
- Continue to focus our on-call firefighter recruitment campaigns at priority locations

The way in which we achieve successful appointment and build a diverse workforce will also require us to review our assessment and selection methodology, in line with the commitments set out in the People Strategy – ‘Resourcing and Talent’ element.

We will develop a detailed plan for the near term recruitment activities and begin to put arrangements in place to implement the new talent management arrangements (at the time of writing this interim workforce plan the proposed changes are with the Service Leadership Team to consider).

The medium term and long-term activities will be detailed in the full workforce plan, to be submitted to SLT in the Summer of 2020.

## **On Call Positions**

Recruiting to on-call positions remains a challenge. We will continue to recruit to our on-call stations, focussing on those that have been identified as priority stations: Canvey, Witham, Ingatestone, West Mersea, Ongar and Brentwood. We will conclude our review of the assessment and selection process in conjunction with Group Managers, the On-Call Project Team and other key stakeholders including Training and the Fitness Team.

We will also work with the On-Call Project team to identify innovative approaches to extend our reach to new candidates through a variety of attraction methods.

We will scope out more detailed proposals for resourcing on-call stations, in conjunction with the on-call programme project team; this will be included in the full workforce plan to follow later this year.

## **Other Resourcing Challenges**

Our full Strategic Workforce Plan will also consider the following resourcing impacts and potential implications:

- Transfer of day crews: Dovercourt have recently transferred; however the full workforce plan will consider the impacts of the transfers on the recruitment and talent management interventions set out in this plan to ensure that we optimise our whole time positions, provide opportunities in a fair and transparent way for our on-call colleagues and

balance this with maintaining sufficient on-call availability.

- Capacity vs Capability: we will need to consider areas where we have adequate capacity – i.e. the right number of people in posts, but maybe do not have adequate capability, either through skills gaps, inability to undertake the full duty of the role due to physical restrictions or some other reason impacting on performance. This will give us a more accurate picture of our workforce ‘gaps’ and what interventions might be needed to close them.
- Fleet workshop engineers and technical support: we will consider the age profile and expected retirements; current and expected market conditions at Lexden and the potential impacts of a move to Boreham.
- ARAs and long-term secondments: we will review these and understand the reasons, timescales, themes and how we can tie these in better with our talent management and succession planning arrangements.
- Secondary contracts and Working Time Regulations: A document with recommendations has recently been submitted to SLT. Depending on

the outcome, proposals for alternative and more effective ways of resourcing will be recommended.

- Temporary contracts: Many of the appointments that we make in the support staff functions are temporary when the post is vacant and ‘permanent’. We will review the number of temporary contracts we have and the reasons for these; and will propose an approach for dealing with these. We will also propose that positions will be temporary only when this is objectively justifiable, e.g. maternity, sickness or long-term absence cover, backfill for a secondment/temporary promotion etc.
- Transfers and promotions principles: in parallel with the above activity, we will establish a common position for grey and green book opportunities in line with the Talent Management arrangements that we adopt.
- Recruitment approach to achieve best possible outcomes: We will detail the approach we will be taking to attract, assess, onboard and develop a diverse workforce, adopting and adapting best practice observed at other Services and within the public sector and other appropriate not-for-profit and private sectors.

- Diversity: We will detail what positive steps we will take to develop our workforce and ensure that we eliminate any gender pay gap.
- Career pathways: As part of our new talent management arrangements we will set out a range of potential career pathways, development opportunities and potential timescales to achieve this. We will propose an approach for removing perceived barriers in all aspects of resourcing to enable both green and grey book employees access to all roles; where the opportunity to apply, and assessment & selection is determined not on the expected terms and conditions of the role, but on the essential and desirable aspects of the person specification for the role.

## Investment

No additional resources are currently required to support the near-term activities proposed in this interim document.

However, there will be some investment required to deliver the medium-term activities in the full workforce plan. This will include investigating and potentially

investing in alternative assessment and selection methodology and development of our approach and materials. A business case will be submitted in this respect.

The full strategic workforce plan is likely to include the following investment requirements:

- Additional operational resources to help us deliver successful recruitment campaigns and talent management interventions
- Additional investment to close the gap by developing and progressing our people through talent pipelines
- Additional investment to address the “Other Resourcing Challenges” captured in the last section of this report.

The investment necessary will be fully costed and presented using informed basis of estimates, and evidence based to support robust decision making.

# High Level Action Plan

A high-level action plan will be included in the full Workforce Plan. In the meantime, the near-term proposals and action owners are set out below:

Ref	Action	Action Owner(s)	Timescale
1.	Continue with the Whole Time Squads for April and October utilising the 2019 successful candidates.	Paul Chipperfield and Natalie Quickenden	Confirm April Squad: April 2019  Confirm October Squad: by July 2020 – see action 2
2.	Contact colleges and CTP to identify potential candidates and future pipelines	Vicki Howells	April and May 2020
3.	Commence a recruitment campaign in June/July to create an external talent pool which we can tap into to ensure that the October squad places are fully optimised and that we have a pool of candidates that we can tap into	Natalie Quickenden	Confirm October Squad: by July 2020 – see action 2
4.	Continue with on-call recruitment with a focus on recruiting to priority stations; ensure that necessary training can be provided	Paul Chipperfield and Natalie Quickenden	Now and ongoing

5.	Work with on-call project team to consider attraction campaign and innovative ways in which we can reach out to potential new candidates: reviewing availability of hours required; through: promotions at fitness centres and socially responsible employers and public sector authorities; colleges; and 'out-of-hours' availability from existing support staff;	Natalie Quickenden and Vicky Howells	Now and ongoing
6.	As part of the revised Talent Management process create an internal talent pipeline for whole time positions	Vicky Howells	By 31 May 2020
7.	Review and put in place assessment and selection approaches to attract and enable us to successfully recruit and onboard a diverse candidate pool	Natalie Quickenden and Vicki Howells with continued input and guidance from Nicki Hudson	By 30 April 2020
8.	Establish the new Talent Management arrangements to enable the necessary volume of talent required to populate our development pools and 'ready now' succession plans	Natalie Quickenden and Vicky Howells	By 31 May 2020
9.	Update this interim plan with long term workforce interventions which will address key resourcing issues – how we make, what we buy and how we achieve an agile approach to ensure that our workforce has the right skills when we need them, and where they are needed.	Natalie Quickenden and Vicky Howells	By 30 June 2020