

## Post Reductions Update

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the progress made on the reduction of the substantive establishment as a result of the Authority's Public Value consultation work. This work resulted from a recognised need to save approximately £3m over four years, commencing in April 2011. This report does not refer to issues, arising from the need to create further budget reductions as a result of funding settlement since 2011, and this work is ongoing.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

#### 3 Background

The Public Value consultation carried out in 2010-11 identified several areas for cost savings. At the Fire Authority meeting in December 2010 Members agreed that in each of the four, forthcoming financial years (2011/12 to 2014/15) a reduction of 2 non-uniformed posts (to an average value of £50,000 per year) and 5 Retained Duty System posts would be achieved.

This report is the final one in a series of annual progress reports against the Public Value activity, which was originally scheduled to deliver £200,000 savings against the non-uniform staffing budget by March 2015.

Since the original target savings figure was set, the Service has dealt with further budget cuts, which have led officers to recognise that, in addition to the £200,000 savings already required, a further £105,000 will need to be saved from the non-uniformed staffing budget by 2020.

## **4 Reductions for 2014-15**

### **Non-uniformed posts – an alternative approach**

As it moves towards 2020 the Service has invested heavily in new technology and processes to ensure that it is working as efficiently as possible. Its Service Transformation Programme is the means, by which this will be delivered.

The Programme includes a wide range of projects, for which funding has been ring-fenced with the aim of investing now to save in the future. Part of that investment has been in recruiting additional specialist skills on a fixed-term basis to help to upgrade systems to reduce the administrative burden further in the future.

In recognising this and in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Group Leaders, agreement was reached to alter the overall targeted savings to still achieve the full £305,000 reduction by 2020, whilst allowing flexibility with vacancies in the meantime to enable officers to recruit those necessary skills in the short term. This also enables officers to recognise the shift in the financial position, i.e. that the budget deficit is delayed as a result of changes in income, meaning that there is a little more time to prepare for reducing staffing.

This means that officers have not formally deleted two posts in April 2014, although cumulative, substantive vacancies now total approximately £160,000. A further reduction of £145,000 by 2020 should potentially be achievable, therefore, if officers continue to manage vacancies as they arise.

### **Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighter posts**

The agreement under Public Value was to delete 5 vacant RDS firefighter posts each year for four years, to achieve a total reduction of 20 posts.

The RDS establishment at 1 April 2010 provided for 343 'units'. Five units have been deleted each year since, which, by 1 April 2014 has reduced the budgeted establishment down to 324. This has not had any direct impact on staff, as the RDS continues to run under establishment and to experience turnover of staff. As a result recruitment is continuing.

## **5 Post reductions to Date (2011 to 2014)**

Post reductions for non-uniformed posts in each of the last three years have been achieved through natural wastage and have been notified to the Human Resources Committee in previous reports. In summary the following reductions have been made:

### **2011-12**

Reductions to the value of £44,500 through the deletion of two posts following natural movement of staff, with the remainder of the target of £50,000 being achieved through other part-time posts being held vacant.

## **2012-13**

Reductions to the value of £50,000 were generated through natural wastage, implementing alternative arrangements for photography services and a continuation of vacancy management.

## **2013-14**

Following a review of the Authority's support services we were unable to attain a reduction of two posts during the period due to the need to support the Transformation Programme. Some savings were, however, achieved through ongoing vacancy management and reductions in software licensing.

## **6 Risks and Mitigation**

As explained in previous annual reports to the Committee, in reducing the non-uniformed establishment the Service is cutting at an already small section of its workforce. The planned reduction of posts will undoubtedly affect the level of support available to the Service Delivery arm.

The risk to the organisation is being mitigated as far as possible by continuing to seek opportunities for reducing costs through efficiencies and by looking to fill priority vacant posts internally, so leaving those 'donating' posts vacant and, therefore, potentially subject to deletion. Officers are also using the technology available to create new processes and reduce administration. This approach aims to protect those roles, which are critical to the day-to-day support of the broader service.

## **7 Financial Implications**

The Head of Finance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and is in agreement with the figures stated.

## **8 Legal Comment**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **9 Equality Impact Assessment**

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (HR 5, Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

## **10 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **11 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.