

Wholetime Recruitment Campaign

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Fire Authority with an update on the decisions made by the Service Management Team (SMT) regarding the most appropriate method of recruiting between 7 and 14 Wholetime Firefighters in 2020/21.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note:

- a) the use of HR Solutions Hub managed electronic system 'SIFT for Firefighter' as the preferred method of recruiting Wholetime Firefighters in 2020/21;
- b) the use of post code restricting our campaign to the West Midlands region; and
- c) the approved funding for Boot Camps for under represented groups

3 Background

Retirement projections indicate that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service will require between 7 and 14 Wholetime Firefighter recruits during 2020/21 with a first intake to commence on Watch in June 2020. The figures are dependent upon vacancies being filled externally or internally with the minimum and maximum projections.

The previous wholetime recruitment campaign took place in 2018. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service used a fully managed online application system provided by the Fire Service college at a cost of £10,500 (excluding vat). This is no longer a viable option as the Fire Service College no longer hold access rights to this system.

4 Considerations for Recruitment

A number of recruitment process options have been considered and are detailed below:

Method	Comments	Outcome
In house – use electronic application form and consider a means of setting up the written tests online	Additional pressure on already stretched ICT team. The application system is not robust enough to deal with the high volume of applications 1000+ that a Wholetime Recruitment Campaign can attract.	Not recommended
Consider working with another service who have existing system in place which would meet our needs	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (along with other regional brigades) have used WMJobs. The Service has used WMJobs previously for other recruitment campaigns and found a number of issues with their system. Staffordshire's feedback was that for a specific recruitment vacancy it was a positive experience, however when used for a campaign requiring additional questions at application stage these had to be marked, and shortlisted, separately which was extremely onerous and resource intensive on their recruitment team. Consideration and discussions were held with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. They were ahead with their recruitment campaign and have now closed their process.	Not recommended
Consider working with an external provider	HR Solutions hub offer an online attraction and selection process which the Service previously used for the WT campaign provided by the Fire Service College in 2018. The system is tried, tested and evaluated and is used by a number of other Brigades as listed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avon ▪ Cumbria ▪ Humberside ▪ Devon & Somerset ▪ Dorset & Wiltshire 	Recommended as preferred method of recruitment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ West Midlands ▪ Durham & Darlington ▪ West Yorkshire ▪ South Yorkshire ▪ North Yorkshire ▪ Nottinghamshire ▪ Cheshire ▪ Oxfordshire ▪ Tyne & Wear ▪ Greater Manchester <p>The system provides an online service for the entire process, from candidate registration through to the completion of all online assessments. The system can then provide the Service with the highest scoring candidates to proceed to the job related physical tests.</p> <p>The system runs across two platforms. The first is the SIFT system which includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial candidate registration ▪ Realistic job preview ▪ Eligibility screening ▪ Behavioural styles questionnaire ▪ Situational judgement test <p>The next platform is the FRS Ability tests which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verbal reasoning ▪ Numerical reasoning ▪ Mechanical reasoning <p>There would be little impact on the HR team and no additional resources would be needed to cope with workloads.</p>	
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Postcode Restrict Applications

The wholetime recruitment campaign held in 2018 restricted applications to only allow applicants residing in the areas listed below. This is in line with the ethos of providing local jobs for local people, as seen with some of the Service's neighbouring services.

- Shropshire
- West Midlands

- Herefordshire
- Worcestershire
- Staffordshire
- Cheshire
- Wrexham
- Powys

The campaign held in 2016 which did not apply postcode restrictions has seen 4 of the 8 candidates leave following completion of their development programmes and apply for their 'home' brigades.

Postcode restriction does not allow the best opportunity to recruit the 'best candidates' from a wide and diverse background however on the basis that the recommendation is to include the West Midlands this would allow applicants from a more diverse area.

5 Boot Camps

In 2018, the Service ran a fitness Boot Camp targeted at under represented groups and designed to focus on areas directly related to the firefighter Job Related Tests, such as cardiovascular fitness and upper body strength. 23 female and 2 BAME candidates attended. Of those candidates, 1 BAME and 2 female applicants were successfully appointed as firefighters in that campaign.

For the 2020/21 campaign, the Service is looking to hold a fitness Boot Camp at Salop Leisure for a maximum of 20 candidates identified from the recent positive action taster days, utilising the associate trainer fitness instructors.

One full session will require 2 associate trainers per session, running for 10 weeks.

Costs for a 10-week bootcamp are

10 weeks venue hire for 1 session per week at £50 per hour	£500.00
2 x associate trainers for 1 x 3 hr session at £46.32 each for 10 weeks	£926.40
Mileage for trainers approx. (20 miles per session at 45p)	£100.00
Cleaning products	£ 50.00
Total	£1576.40

6 Recommendations

- Approve the use of the HR Solutions Hub managed electronic system 'SIFT for Firefighter and FRS Ability Test Suite' as the preferred method of recruiting Wholetime Firefighters in 2020/21.**

The main advantages of using this system are:

- All sifting will be done electronically
- The SIFT platform was designed and tested in partnership with Fire Service personnel such as Firefighters, Crew Managers, Watch Managers and Station Managers to ensure a fair and realistic process
- Content of the assessments has been reviewed, and approved, by a diversity expert to ensure a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory process and an equality impact assessment review undertaken.
- Scoring is automated through the system, reducing the need for additional staffing to mark/verify the scores.
- There will be no impact on current resources as HR Solutions Hub will manage the online process and provide a shortlist of applicants to progress through to job related tests.

This system has been trialled and used by a number of Brigades who have all found it successful and fit for purpose. It is a non-resource intensive system without the requirement for extra support during the campaign. HR solutions Hub will provide advice, support and assistance throughout the period that the campaign is open both to HR and applicants.

b) Approve the use of post code restricting the campaign to the West Midlands region

Post code restriction including the West Midlands region should provide a balance of providing applications from under represented groups but enable the process to be manageable and limit a high volume of initial applications from all over the country.

c) Approve funding for Boot Camps

Boot camp proved successful in encouraging under represented groups to commit to the application process and results from the 2018 campaign show that the boot camps played a part in supporting BAME and female applicants in the selection process.

7 Conclusions

Taking into consideration the timescales the Service is working to; it is considered that the system delivered through HR Solutions Hub is the most efficient and cost-effective system to use. A suggested recruitment timeline is listed at Appendix A.

8 Financial Implications

The cost of using the system promoted by HR Solutions Hub would be approximately £11,500. A breakdown of what is included in that cost can be found at Appendix B to the report. The Boot Camp overall cost is around £1,600.

9 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10 Initial Impact Assessment

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

11 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

12 Appendices

Appendix A

Wholetime Recruitment Timeline

Appendix B

Campaign Cost

13 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Wholetime Recruitment Campaign 2020 Proposed Timetable

Event	Date	Duration
Boot Camps	29 September 2020	6 – 8 weeks
Social media campaign	Mid September	6 weeks
Campaign Opens	2-11-20	7 days
Successful candidates invited to undertake Assessment 1	9-11-20	7 days
Successful candidates invited to undertake Assessment 2	16-11-20	7 days
Successful candidates invited to undertake Ability Tests	30-11-20	7 days
Campaign Closes	5-12-20	
<i>(invite successful candidates to JRT's)</i>		
Job Related Tests	November / December	4 weeks
<i>(Invite successful candidates to interview)</i>		
Interviews	January 2021	4 weeks
<i>(invite successful candidates to medical)</i>		
Medical & Fitness	March 2021	1 week
<i>(inform successful candidates)</i>		
Recruits Course	April / May 2021	8 weeks
On the run	June 2020	

**a recruitment campaign timetable will be published on the Service's website informing all applicants at the start of the process, of the dates of each stage of the campaign

Cost of SIFT for Firefighter Online Recruitment System

Section	Cost	Includes
Campaign license	£8,500	All online stages from registration through the online assessments and automated scoring
Set-up fee	£500	Set up all aspects of the online system Provide links and information for website Manage online applications Deal with all technical queries Deal with reasonable adjustments where necessary for online assessments Administration of all online assessments Shortlisting
HR Solutions Hub managed service fee (up to 1500 applicants)	£2,500	Support on communications to candidates Support on all aspects of the online system during length of campaign. Downloading of all results, scores, shortlisting in format to fit Service needs
Total	£11,500	