

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

DRAFT NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

1 Purpose of Report

To inform the Human Resources Committee of the draft UK Fire and Rescue Service Human Resources Strategy, written by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), which has been issued for consultation. The closing date for responses is 15 March 2006.

2 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the report and provide comment if they wish.

3 Background

With the advent of the modernisation agenda Human Resource (HR) matters have come to the fore within the Fire and Rescue Service nationally. In recognition of this many Services have amended their internal structure to provide better support for the requirements of the work locally. A key piece of the jigsaw, however, is a national strategy to set the direction for HR in the Fire and Rescue Service, which can then in turn be mirrored in the regional and local HR work that is ongoing.

4 The Draft National Human Resources Strategy

Members of CFOA recognised that there was a shortfall in that, although the National Framework Document sets HR issues in terms of staff and development high on the modernisation agenda, it does not give sufficient direction for Services to be able to link into, and prioritise, areas of work locally, regionally and nationally. At the National HR Practitioners Forum, which meets bimonthly throughout the year, it was recognised that a national strategy was needed and a working group was established to draft the document. This group worked throughout 2004, taking the draft to the Forum meeting in September 2005 for comment.



The Assistant Chief Officer participated in this working group and supported the development of the strategy. Members will, therefore, be unsurprised to note that there are no suggested recommended responses on the document that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service would wish to submit, as there has been input throughout the development of the document. The Draft Strategy is attached as an appendix to this report for Members' information and comment.

5 Legal Comment

There are no legal comments arising directly out of this report.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications relating to this report. There will, however, be financial implications relating to the implementation of the National Human Resources Strategy but officers are as yet unaware of what they may be.

7 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality or diversity issues arising directly from this report.

8 Appendix

UK Fire and Rescue Service Human Resources Strategy Consultation

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

For further information about this report please contact Louise McKenzie, Assistant Chief Officer, on 01743 260201.





UK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

Consultation

Deadline for submissions
15 March 2006

Contents

Introduction.....	Page 3
Why an HR Strategy?.....	Page 4
Objectives.....	Page 5
Key Priorities.....	Page 6
Priority 1: Developing Leadership Capacity.....	Page 9
Priority 2: Developing the Organisation.....	Page 10
Priority 3: Developing the Skills and Capacity of the workplace.....	Page 12
Priority 4: Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service.....	Page 14
Priority 5: Recognition and Reward.....	Page 17
Priority 6: Developing the Capacity of HR.....	Page 19

UK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HR STRATEGY

1. Introduction

1.1 This strategy sets out a comprehensive approach to help ensure that local authority, Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) have the right numbers of skilled people in the right places and at the right time to deliver more “customer focused” front line services and drive down risk. The strategy is designed to enable the Fire and Rescue Service to achieve its primary purpose, live up to its core values and to deliver its vision. It has been developed by the Chief Fire Officer’s Association (CFOA), but should also be considered in conjunction with other strategies developed nationally within the FRS regulatory framework and governance arrangements.

1.2 The primary purpose of a modern fire and rescue service, therefore, is: -

To help build a safer society and a sustainable community by working in partnership with others to promote community well being, whilst reducing death and injury, damage to property and damage to the environment from fire and other emergencies.

1.3 In order to achieve this purpose, we must be able to meet changing public expectations of what the service is here to do, and we must retain the high levels of public respect and support which the fire and rescue service currently enjoys. Consequently, it is necessary to have a clear picture of the organisation we are seeking to develop.

1.4 Our **vision** of a modern fire and rescue service is of one that: -

- **works with local communities and other agencies to promote community safety and community well being, and to sustain those communities by reducing risks to life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies;**
- **intervenes promptly and effectively when fire and other emergencies occur;**
- **has a well equipped, skilled and motivated workforce, able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse communities we serve;**

- **pursues continuous improvement in all its functions in order to deliver best value and make efficient use of resources.**

2. Why an HR strategy?

- 2.1 The Fire and Rescue Service underwent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the first time in 2005 and this process provided a broad indication of progress in moving forward with the direction of travel. The outcome of CPA has stressed and reinforced the importance of people as a key resource. It has also placed an emphasis on people management, workforce planning and workforce development, which have specific significance for the FRS in the context of embedding the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) within the broader HR agenda.
- 2.2 If we are to modernise the Fire & Rescue Service and reflect the outcomes of CPA, we need to identify the strategic, people management outcomes that should be delivered in a national context so that FRSs at local level, and through their regional collaborative approaches, can deliver the vision.
- 2.3 CFOA recognises that the HR strategy must be delivered within the resources available to the Fire & Rescue Service; change needs to improve the efficiency and productivity of the service and real improvements in the pay and conditions of the employees of the FRS need to be both affordable and matched by improvements in service delivery.
- 2.4 Accordingly, this Human Resources (HR) strategy takes a national perspective. It seeks to enable FRS's to maximise the capacity and performance of the workforce.
- 2.5 The Strategy is designed to encompass all employees within the Fire and Rescue Service and is recommended to the key national stakeholders as well as individual FRS's. The strategy is intended to be realistic and will span a five year period, and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant.
- 2.6 The strategy has also been developed taking into account, and to an extent mirroring, the Pay and Workforce Strategy for Local Government (jointly owned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Local Government Association and Employers' Organisation). This has been done to ensure that, in future, the service is not seen as an arms length service, rather it is more closely aligned to an integrated public service agenda.

3. Objectives

3.1 The broad objectives of the strategy are outlined below and focus on six key priority areas considered to be central to delivery.

3.2 The Broad Objectives of the HR Strategy are to:

- **Support the FRS in meeting current and future organisational needs.**
- **Support the FRS in achieving an effective balance between intervention, prevention, safety, civil protection and resilience**
- **Support the FRS in achieving a culture of continuous improvement in organisational, team and individual performance**
- **Support the FRS in achieving a diverse workforce that is representative of the communities it serves across all occupational groups and at all levels promoting equality, fairness and dignity in the treatment of all employees**
- **Support the FRS in achieving best value from its investment in people management; including the efficient and effective targeting, deployment and management of resources and expertise**
- **Support the FRS in creating and sustaining a competent, motivated and well-led workforce – recognising the particular context of leadership in the operational/critical incident management aspect of FRS activity.**
- **Support the FRS in developing and implementing employment packages that meet the needs of a modernised service and flexible workforce**
- **Support the FRS in developing collaborative methods of working and effective partnerships**
- **Support the FRS in promoting the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer of choice**
- **Support the FRS in recognising the contribution of all employees across the Fire and Rescue Service.**

4. Key Priorities

- 4.1 CFOA recognises that we need clearly identified priorities if we are to achieve these objectives and these must be supported by action plans detailing lead stakeholder responsibility. Additionally, there will need to be a Programme Board (Executive Group), including HR professionals as well as other stakeholders, assembled to oversee the delivery of the Strategy, to monitor its effectiveness and to facilitate the on-going review mechanism.
- 4.2 CFOA believes it is best placed to lead and co-ordinate this programme board through the Executive Director for HR.
- 4.3 We consider there are six, key priorities that flow from these objectives:

1. **Developing Leadership Capacity** – amongst both officers and members, (including attracting effective leaders into Fire and Rescue Services from other sectors.)
2. **Developing the organisation** – to achieve excellence in people and performance management, partnerships and the efficient delivery of services.
3. **Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce** – across all areas of FRS's, including technical, specialist and support services, management and the frontline workforce.
4. **Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service** – ensuring that authorities plan for, recruit, develop and retain the employees they need, whilst supporting and promoting equality and diversity.
5. **Recognition and Reward** – Having pay, reward and recognition structures that attract, retain, motivate and develop a skilled and flexible workforce whilst achieving value for money in service delivery.
6. **Developing the Capacity of HR** – Identifying and building on the skills and expertise of the HR function in planning and delivering the modernisation agenda.

- 4.4 These six priorities are expanded below:

Priority 1- Developing Leadership Capacity

This will focus on supporting and improving the quality of political and managerial leadership in the service. This includes developing the capacity of existing top teams, planning the development of future leaders, championing leadership values throughout the organisation and attracting effective leaders, where appropriate, from other sectors.

There is also a need to provide better induction, training and development for elected members, with a particular focus on FRS specific issues. We need to understand the unusual and different challenges that face leaders and managers in the fire and rescue service as a consequence of the juxtaposition of the operational emergency response, and critical incident demands, alongside more generally recognised organisational management.

Priority 2 – Developing the Organisation

This will focus on identifying successful approaches to managing performance and productivity to support the delivery of continuous improvement.

We need to create a people management culture across the Fire and Rescue Service focusing on quality people management and performance, in the context of core values, as the foundation for improvement.

We want to build a successful partnership approach to employee relations focused at the appropriate level within the service to enable change to be managed effectively.

We must seek to achieve the benefits of a more flexible workforce, able to deliver high quality and efficient customer focused services. This includes remodelling the workforce, and achieving greater movement across professional and skills boundaries. It also includes optimising the use of new technology to improve outcomes from flexible working arrangements that support service delivery and work-life balance.

We must challenge further how we currently operate and develop the role of the community and voluntary sectors, as well as considering the role of the private sector in the provision and delivery of services. Local authorities, and by implication fire authorities, are moving towards a model of local community leadership and being a commissioner of services rather than an exclusive provider. FRS's will need to consider this in their thinking.

Priority 3 – Developing the Skills and Capacity of the Workforce

The service needs to build on the framework that now exists for people development. The achievement of a significant increase in the skills of employees, including establishing 'skills pathways' to raise levels of training, development and performance and multi-skilling, will increase productivity and flexibility, and promote cultural change.

We must also improve the quality of operational learning and development to enhance the risk critical skills of front line employees and provide a

career path for technical and specialist staff to support operational assurance.

CFOA is committed to raising performance and skill levels in key areas such as project and programme management, financial management and human resources. We want to challenge and improve existing service standards, change management processes, procurement, partnership working and learn from best practice.

Priority 4 – Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service

We seek to ensure that all Fire and Rescue Services adopt effective strategies for recruiting and managing a diverse workforce reflecting the communities they serve. It is crucial that we improve the involvement of under-represented groups at all levels in the service, including elected members and officers.

We must develop better workforce planning across the sector.

Targeting and attracting talented people into the service, promoting a positive image of the FRS among potential applicants, particularly from under represented groups will also be a vital ingredient to our success.

Diversity in every sense must be mainstreamed into managing performance and ensuring that workforce diversity issues are tackled effectively.

Priority 5 – Recognition and Reward

We want to continue to modernise local pay, reward and recognition structures to support a high-performance, highly skilled and flexible workforce.

There should be fairness in pay and reward structures across all occupational groups within the Fire and Rescue Services taking into account the different governance/employment relationships that exist.

In developing pay strategies, however, we must continue to combine the flexibility of local determination of pay levels within the stability of a national collective bargaining framework for general pay increases for all groups of staff covered by national bargaining arrangements.

We must also ensure that any national overarching framework of terms and conditions (e.g. grey book) is reviewed regularly to support the business needs of the Service.

Priority 6 – Developing the capacity of HR

We need to invest in the people management and development skills within the Fire and Rescue Service to create the intellectual capacity to enable the Service to be transformed. It is crucial that we develop the HR role from being predominantly advisory and transactional, to becoming a more strategic partner and key advisor to the Service.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The following sections highlight what we consider to be the principal headline actions to be addressed within the six priority themes identified above.
- 5.2 Following consultation on the draft strategy, these need to be added to, and then developed into more detailed action plans with other key stakeholders. These action plans will have key milestones, performance targets and measures and a review mechanism.
- 5.3 We acknowledge that more work needs to be done on these actions but we believe we need to share this thinking as early as possible in the consultation process.

6. PRIORITY 1 - DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Our key aims will be to:

- 6.1 **Support and develop the leadership capacity of the Fire and Rescue Service's Senior Managers and Elected Members by:**
 - Developing and implementing the national Leadership Strategy and the Core Values.
 - Working with a Centre for Leadership for the Fire and Rescue Service, the IDeA and the Local Government Leadership Centre and other agencies to support and develop leadership capacity.
 - Ensuring that Elected Members have the knowledge and understanding of fire and rescue issues to enable them to be effective in their role.
 - Sharing learning opportunities for senior managers and elected members.
 - Developing the capacity and quality of top teams.
 - Promoting the development and use of assessment tools to evaluate the impact of leadership competences

6.2 Attract and develop leaders at all levels by:

- Encouraging the adoption of an agreed framework of leadership skills and competencies for officers and members.
- Support succession planning and systems to identify and support staff with high potential for future leadership positions, for example:
 - Talent management including Fast Tracking and accelerated development.
 - Multi-level entry.
 - Secondment and other placement opportunities.
 - Leader, and leadership development programmes.
- Effective implementation of Assessment and Development Centres to identify, select and develop individuals with leadership potential

6.3 Key Actions:

- To work with lead stakeholders to devise induction and development programmes for existing and potential leaders.
- Work with stakeholders to develop a national information pack for elected members.
- Support and contribute to leadership development stemming from national strategies, including a FRS Centre for Leadership.
- Develop guidance on succession planning strategies for national, regional and local use.
- Develop cross-sector partnerships and HR frameworks to support leadership development through work exchange and secondment.

7. PRIORITY 2 - DEVELOPING THE ORGANISATION

Our key aims will be to:

7.1 Change organisational culture and manage productivity and performance effectively by:

- Promoting effective performance management.

- Supporting and sharing best practice in delivery against people management performance indicators.
- Supporting improvements in organisational productivity and efficiency.
- Developing new and innovative employment solutions to deliver services.
- Identifying and implementing best practice in flexible working.
- Identifying and working with partners including the community and voluntary and the private sectors.
- Supporting the development of the requisite skills and capacity within the workforce of the Fire and Rescue Service.

7.2 Build and maintain effective employee relations by:

- Supporting effective engagement and communication strategies for all employees within FRS.
- Promoting an effective dialogue between the manager and the employee, as the basis of the employment relationship in the workplace.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of new employee relations procedures including the opportunities for harmonisation for all staff.
- Ensuring that all staff are treated with respect and dignity and valued for their contribution in line with core values.

7.3 Build and maintain effective industrial relations by:

- Supporting the development of new relationships at local/regional level with appropriate trade unions.
- Supporting the development of effective local industrial relations procedures, including single table consultation arrangements.
- Promoting industrial relations on the basis of management's right to manage and trade union's right to represent their membership.
- Supporting the achievement of change through agreement.
- Promoting a business focused approach to managing the consultation and negotiating process.

7.4 Key Actions

- Support the implementation of leadership standards to promote organisational performance – (This will be contingent on the timescale of the new Leadership Strategy.)
- Through the HR Programme Board, produce an annual action plan for the production of prioritised HR tools and guidance (examples include performance management processes, employee engagement and communication strategies, equality impact assessments).
- Provide an e-enabled facility to share examples of good HR policy, guidance and practice, to include, for example, performance management, flexible and family friendly working arrangements.
- Undertake a review of the effectiveness of new employee relations procedures.
- Produce code of conduct for all employees within the FRS to ensure positive behaviours in the workplace.
- Work with other stakeholders to develop industrial relations skills for HR and other senior managers.
- Produce best practice guidance on industrial relations within the FRS to support partnership working and deliver organisational change.
- Devise a CFOA led industrial relations advisory network for national, regional and local support.

8. PRIORITY 3 - DEVELOPING THE SKILLS AND CAPACITY OF THE WORKFORCE

Our key aims will be to:

8.1 Raise performance and skills across all FRS functions to meet service needs by:

- Ensuring the Fire and Rescue Service provides an effective framework for people development, supported through the Integrated Personal Development System.
- Supporting the development of National Occupational Standards to reflect the changing role of the FRS.

- Recognising the overarching principles and key elements in the FRS Learning and Development Strategy for England (and any similar strategies covering Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).
- Promoting effective performance management systems.
- Ensuring that learning and development addresses organisational, team and individual skills gaps.
- Recognising achievement of competence, for example through attainment of vocational or other appropriate qualifications, including academic qualifications.
- Supporting flexible learning opportunities.
- Promoting effective working with diverse communities and organisations.
- Developing an inclusive and positive culture that values diversity and challenges unacceptable behaviours.
- Ensuring that risk critical learning and development needs are prioritised with an appropriate emphasis on critical incident command.
- Developing the professional capacity to deliver effective learning and development.

8.2 Build capacity to meet service needs by:

- Promoting the utilisation of skills and capacity within services to meet the needs identified within a FRS's Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- Supporting the development of effective change management.
- Encouraging fire and rescue services to adopt appropriate quality management systems, such as liP.

8.3 Key Actions:

- Provide a leading contribution to the development and review of frameworks for people development, IPDS, occupational standards, vocational qualifications and the delivery of effective learning and development.
- Develop best practice guidance on the implementation of effective employee development frameworks. To include skill gap analysis, and alternative options for learning and development.

- Provide a toolkit to assess the effectiveness and return on learning and development.
- Support the achievement of critical incident command (incident command) through work on operational assurance.
- Support the implementation of the National Learning & Development Strategy and the Centre of Excellence concept.

9. PRIORITY 4 - RESOURCING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Our key aims will be to:

9.1 Build a diverse workforce by:

- Recognising the requirement for the whole workforce to reflect local community profiles and support the achievement of performance targets.
- Establishing links with community groups and national bodies such as CRE, EOC.
- Identifying under-represented groups locally in the workforce and encouraging new approaches to ensure open access to recruitment opportunities.
- Building a safe and healthy working environment which is welcoming and inclusive.
- Meeting legal requirements and encouraging the use of equality impact assessments across working practices, selection and progression practices.
- Promoting the profile of the FRS as a career option amongst under-represented groups.

9.2 Manage effective recruitment and progression by:

- Supporting the use of fair and transparent recruitment and promotion processes at all levels for all employee groups.
- Promoting collaborative national, regional and local audit procedures for recruitment and progression arrangements to ensure effectiveness and monitor impact.

- Supporting recruitment and retention initiatives for shortages in key skills.
- Establishing the FRS as a provider of a career development path that meets the aspirations of potential and existing employees.

9.3 Attract and retain talented people by:

- Promoting the FRS as an employer of choice.
- Encouraging recruitment and progression of talented individuals, including through multi-level entry and fast-tracking schemes.
- Encouraging the provision of a positive working environment which recognises the contribution of individuals and supports the aims set out in 'Developing the Organisation'.
- Promoting the development of managers skill sets to recognise and encourage talent

9.4 Deliver effective Workforce Planning by:

- Promoting robust and consistent workforce planning systems and procedures and the sharing of best practice.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of workforce planning at national, regional and local level.
- Identification of future demographic and skills issues that will impact on the service nationally.

9.5 Key Actions:

- With other key stakeholders, establish a national community outreach network to assist services build a diverse workforce.
- Identify good practice approaches to workforce planning across the FRS to facilitate consistent analysis of workforce and skills needs at national, regional and local level.
- Develop communications strategies to promote the FRS as an employer of choice for the whole community.
- Identify a joint work programme with other stakeholders to address recruitment requirements of the service.
- Ensure Firefighter Selection Tests meet the needs of the service without adverse impact on any group and are subsequently reviewed to assess outcomes and impact (to include a review of psychological and physical tests). This is to include the development of performance criteria of fitness in support of the above.

- Work with other stakeholders to develop a more accurate and appropriate approach to target setting.
- To develop performance criteria to assess the fitness of firefighters and to have mechanisms to assess fitness.

10. PRIORITY 5 - RECOGNITION AND REWARD

Our key aims will be to:

10.1 Shape future pay and reward strategies by:

- Developing pay and reward structures for all employees to support a high performance, highly skilled and flexible workforce with the necessary motivation to deliver improved services within the resources available
- Establishing a clear linkage between reward and change with clear focus on outcomes
- Developing National pay and reward strategies (e.g. Grey Book 2007 negotiations) to include the following principles:
 - Enabling flexibility in reward, for example competency based pay spine to facilitate local determination of jobs and pay practice
 - Consideration of the integration of reward for individual contribution
 - Facilitating local/regional initiatives for pay and reward practice
 - Creation of a management cadre through differentiation in pay and reward arrangements
 - Ensuring that pay and reward packages reflect the significance of the leadership roles performed within the Service
- Responding to future pension and compensation proposals in support of the needs of the service

10.2 Develop pay arrangements which recognise the contribution of all employees by:

- Ensuring equal pay for work of equal value based on the principle of transparent and equitable local pay arrangements, taking account of different negotiating bodies and the resources available

10.3 Provide a terms and conditions framework to support service delivery by:

- Establishing a national framework of terms and conditions which will ensure the development of local flexibility to meet local needs

- Encouraging harmonisation of terms and conditions across occupational groups within local fire and rescue services where appropriate

10.4 Develop an effective employment package by:

- Developing and promoting elements within the employment package to support the fire and rescue service being an employer of choice, for example, the psychological contract, work/life balance, personal development, health and wellbeing.

10.5 Key Actions:

- Review effectiveness of the 2003 Pay Agreement through facilitating workshops.
- Identify key outcome requirements for the 2007 pay and conditions negotiations, including options for local flexibility.
- With other stakeholders, contribute to the development of detailed negotiating options.

11. PRIORITY 6 - DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF HR

Our key aims will be to:

11.1 Strengthen the contribution of the HR profession to the fire and rescue service by:

- Developing the contribution of HR to strategic decision-making at national, regional and service level.
- Championing the professional contribution of HR to the service.
- Demonstrating and promoting the added value of professional HR contributions to improved organisational performance.

11.2 Strengthen people management practice by:

- Promoting best practice approaches/standards to people management and development of appropriate skills/standards.
- Promoting the importance of developing people management skills in managers through professional HR support.

11.3 Maximise the contribution of HR by:

- Facilitating the sharing of best practice at local, regional and national level.

- Identifying and co-ordinating national HR networks and undertaking projects at national and regional level.
- Promoting innovative and cost effective solutions to the delivery of HR services.
- Promoting skills and capacity to support achievement of organisational change.

11.4 Develop HR professionals by:

- Promoting links to CIPD and other professional organisations, e.g. SOCPO, IDeA.
- Promoting appropriate professional standards and qualifications for HR disciplines.
- Supporting continuing professional development of HR skills and knowledge to meet the improvement objectives of the fire and rescue service at national, regional and local level.

11.5 Key Actions:

- Identify a mechanism to assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of HR.
- Develop guidance on the contribution of the HR function to successful organisational development and comprehensive performance assessment.
- Undertake a skills and qualifications audit of FRS HR employees.
- Develop relationships with professional bodies to facilitate sharing of knowledge and good practice and the development of a professional HR function.
- Produce draft terms of reference for the national HR Forum.