

# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PERSONNEL STRATEGY

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This strategy sets out a comprehensive approach to help ensure that Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) have the right numbers of skilled people in the right places and at the right time to deliver front line services and drive down risk. The strategy is designed to enable BFRS to achieve its primary purpose and vision, develop and live up to its core values and to deliver its priorities. It has been developed from the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) national Human Resources Strategy, but should also be considered in conjunction with other strategies developed both locally by BFRS and nationally within the Fire and Rescue Service regulatory framework and governance arrangements.

1.2 The primary purpose and vision of BFRS is: -

**Making you safer, by working together to reduce death and injury and damage to property, the environment and our heritage from fire and other emergencies. We will achieve this by balancing the provision of prevention, protection and response services.**

1.3 Our **vision** is underpinned by 5 key priorities:

- **Working in partnership with key agencies to promote awareness, and to build responsible communities through education to reduce risk to life, property, our heritage and the environment.**
- **Having a healthy, flexible, diverse, skilled and motivated workforce.**
- **Reviewing and continuously improving performance.**
- **Delivering these priorities cost effectively.**
- **Maintaining a continuing professional response to all operational emergencies.**

1.4 In order to achieve the vision and priorities above, we must be able to meet the 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.

1.3.1 We anticipate that in the future BFRS will be different in a number of ways in “personnel” terms. The organisation is likely to be larger as organisational capacity improvements continue and the increasing population of the county is reflected in our service delivery requirements. Staff will be deployed in a more flexible way to meet community risk and to optimise resources. Alternative staff working patterns will be in place such as part time hours with more interchange between wholetime and retained staff. Staff will be better trained to discharge their operational, technical, and managerial responsibilities and managers will be expected and permitted to manage. The organisation will be more inclusive and will recognise better the contribution all staff provide to the service and their communities. The staff in the organisation will better reflect the community of Buckinghamshire. Support services will be better resourced, skilled, and regarded by the whole organisation. Inappropriate behaviour will have been removed and staff will operate to an agreed set of values. Staff will still be proud to be members of the service and the public will still view our staff with high regard and respect.

## **2. Why a Personnel strategy?**

1.1 There are 4 principal drivers for the production of this strategy:

- BFRS undertook a restructuring exercise in 2004 which led to the creation of the Personnel Directorate. This was formed by combining 2 functions - Human Resources and Training and Development – that had previously existed quite separately. Both functions had traditionally been under-resourced and generally badly regarded by an organisation that was itself weak and highly vulnerable to criticism in various areas. After a year of high levels of activity and improvement inside the department, together with various much needed developments in the wider organisation, it is appropriate now to reflect on the requirements of the organisation in “personnel” terms.
- The Brigade underwent a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the first time in 2005 and this process provided a broad indication of the current position of the organisation against national expectations. 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 has specific significance for BFRS in the context of mainstreaming the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS).
- The recent restructuring of CFOA, and the production in Autumn 2005 of a national Fire and Rescue Service HR strategy from this and other associated national work, provides a timely foundation to a local Personnel strategy.
- Governmental strategic direction such as the National Framework together with new and emerging statutory legislation that impacts on the Service provides an obvious requirement for a clearly defined local Personnel strategy. In addition, ongoing changes to the Brigades operational environment, together with ever increasing external scrutiny on risk critical

issues and associated potential for litigation, means that a structured and formalised approach to planning is essential.

- 1.2 If we are to modernise the fire service and deal effectively with the issues above, we need to identify the strategic, people management outcomes that are needed locally to deliver our vision. The Personnel strategy therefore sets out the strategic aims of the BFRS Personnel Directorate.
- 1.3 The limited resources within the department contrast with an enormous agenda for change. It must therefore be recognised that the Personnel strategy must be delivered pragmatically within the resources available to the Brigade that includes making optimum use of partnership and collaborative arrangements with others. In addition change needs to improve the efficiency and productivity of the service and real improvements in the pay and conditions of the employees of BFRS need to be both affordable and matched by improvements in service delivery.
- 1.4 Accordingly, this strategy takes a local view of what is a wider national perspective, and is drawn heavily from the new national CFOA HR strategy to which key BFRS staff made a significant contribution. It seeks to enable BFRS to maximise the capacity and performance of its workforce to advance and continuously improve the local management of its services.
- 1.5 The strategy is designed to encompass all employees within BFRS. The strategy is intended to be realistic and so it will span a five year period but it will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant. An annual departmental service plan will sit alongside the Strategy that that will provide the details of the shorter term key actions that are planned to deliver the requirements of the strategy. It aims to incorporate all relevant issues highlighted in other strategic planning documents such as the IRMP, the National Framework, and the CPA Improvement Plan.
- 1.6 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 approach.

### 3. Objectives

- 1.1 The broad objectives of the strategy are outlined below and lead on to six key priority areas considered to be central to the delivery of the BFRS vision.
- 1.2 The broad objectives of the Personnel strategy are to:
  - **Support BFRS in meeting current and future organisational needs.**
  - **Support BFRS in achieving an effective balance between intervention, prevention, safety, civil protection and resilience**
  - **Support BFRS in achieving a culture of continuous improvement in organisational, team and individual performance**
  - **Support BFRS in achieving a diverse workforce that is representative of the community it serves across all occupational groups and at all levels promoting equality, fairness and dignity in the treatment of all employees**
  - **Support BFRS in achieving best value from its investment in people management and development; including the efficient and effective targeting, deployment and management of resources and expertise**
  - **Support BFRS 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 BFRS in developing and implementing employment packages and conditions that meet the needs of a modernised service and flexible workforce**
  - **Support BFRS by promoting it as a full time and part time employer of choice**
  - **Support BFRS by recognising the contribution of all employees.**

### 4. Key Priorities

- 1.1 It is recognised that we need clearly identified priorities if we are to achieve these objectives and these must be supported by an annual action plan detailing specific work. Additionally, there will need to be a firm commitment from both the Authority and the Brigade generally to support the ongoing enhancements to the Directorate, its key priorities and the detailed work that supports them. The limited resources available means that priorities must be determined based on risk and a high level of organisational discipline must be maintained in terms of strategic planning.

1.2 The Director of Personnel will have corporate responsibility for the discharge of this strategy with political support and assistance from the Fire Authority lead members for Human Resources, Training, and Diversity.

1.3 We consider there are six key priorities that flow from the above objectives and need to be achieved:

- 1. Developing Leadership Capacity** – amongst both officers and members, (including attracting and identifying future leaders for BFRS.)
- 2. Developing the organisation** – to achieve excellence in people and performance management, partnership working, equality and diversity and the efficient delivery of services.
- 3. Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce** – across all areas of BFRS, including the frontline workforce, management, technical, specialist and support service staff.
- 4. Resourcing the Service** – ensuring that we plan for, recruit, develop and retain the employees we need.
- 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.

1.4 These six priorities are expanded below:

#### **Priority 1 - Developing Leadership Capacity**

This will focus on supporting and improving the quality of managerial and political leadership in the service. This includes developing the capacity of existing managerial staff, planning the development of future leaders, championing leadership values throughout the organisation and attracting good leaders, where appropriate, from outside the Brigade.

There is also a need to maintain our recent initiation of better induction, training and development for elected members, with a particular focus on fire and rescue service 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 combination 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 an improved people management culture across BFRS focusing on quality people management and performance, as the foundation for improvement.

We want to continually build on our 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, efficient community focused services. This includes remodelling the workforce, and achieving a greater optimisation of staffing resources. 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 deliver our operational and support services and maintain our previous approaches in seeking collaborative and partnership arrangements to deliver our needs.

### **Priority 3 – Developing the Skills and Capacity of the Workforce**

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

We must also improve the quality of operational training and development to enhance the risk critical skills of front line employees – particularly in key areas such as Incident Command that have had insufficient attention in the past. In addition we must continually review the operational and managerial environments our staff work in to ensure we adequately and safely provide them with the skills they need. We must likewise provide a career path and appropriate development for technical and specialist staff to support operational service delivery and assurance.

Training and Development in BFRS has traditionally been focussed on core operational skills with other departments generally taking responsibility for wider staff development in specialist areas. Whilst available resources will inevitably maintain this principle for some time, we are committed to raising performance and skill levels in various key areas such as project and programme management, financial management and human resources, and we want to challenge and improve existing service standards, and change management processes where appropriate.

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

#### **Priority 4 – Resourcing the Service**

The location of BFRS and wider economic factors mean that we face difficult and ongoing issues in relation to staff retention. We must therefore develop better workforce planning across the sector – particularly with regard to positively attracting staff for the retained duty system and in providing effective succession planning and development.

We must continually enhance the skills levels and capacity of our support departments that have traditionally been under resourced and under recognised in the past.

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

#### **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 in keeping with national directions.

We wish to continue to develop fairness in pay and reward structures across all occupational groups within the Brigade taking into account the different contractual and employment relationships that exist.

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

#### **Priority 6 – Developing the capacity of HR**

We need to invest further in the people management and development skills within BFRS to create the capacity to enable the Service to be improved. This means we must continue to enhance the HR function and to provide better levels of staff management across the organisation. Developing the HR role from being under resourced and predominantly advisory and transactional, to a more strategic, high quality, and fit for purpose function, is crucial.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 1.1 The following sections highlight what we consider to be the principal headline actions to be addressed within the six priority themes identified above.
- 1.2 These actions have emerged from a combination of areas, and include:
  - CPA and other formal external audits of the organisation and resulting internal plans
  - Specific expectations placed on the Brigade through legislation
  - Internal analysis of organisational issues e.g. corporate risk register, health and safety information, performance monitoring, and operational assurance reports
  - Good practice in both Fire and Rescue services elsewhere and wider organisations.
- 1.3 We acknowledge that these actions may change and new areas of need will emerge depending on the changing managerial environment that the Brigade operates within. We aim, however, to maintain as much discipline as is possible in keeping focussed on the strategy and its associated actions.
- 1.4 BFRS agreed in 2005 to support a regional Equalities Strategy and also in 2005 agreed a revised Race Equality Scheme. Both these documents are published separately however should be read in conjunction with this Personnel strategy.

## **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 Managers and Elected Members by:**

- Providing an effective IPDS based development framework for staff
- Promoting the development and use of assessment and performance management tools to enhance leadership ability.
- Implementing the local requirements of the national Leadership Strategy and the Core Values.
- Ensuring that Elected Members have the knowledge, and understanding of fire and rescue issues to enable them to be effective in their role.
- Providing and sharing learning opportunities for managers.
- Assisting to develop the capacity and quality of all teams and functions in the Brigade.
- Providing appropriately skilled and qualified support staff to enhance capacity and output of managers.

### **6.2 Attract and develop leaders at all levels by:**

- Adopting nationally agreed frameworks of leadership skills and competencies for officers and members.
- Implement and maintain succession planning and systems to identify and support staff with potential for future leadership positions.
- Effective implementation of Assessment and Development Centres to identify, select and develop individuals with leadership potential
- Securing the highest standard of candidates possible by effective advertising and providing the best possible conditions of employment.

### **6.3 Key Actions:**

- To implement development programmes for new Managers.
- Implement higher leadership development opportunities stemming from national strategies, including the FRS Centre for Leadership, once implemented nationally.
- To continue to develop a development plan for elected members.
- To continue to develop effective staff succession planning systems.
- To continue to support enhanced staff resources of support departments through staff selection and development.

## **7. PRIORITY 2 - DEVELOPING THE ORGANISATION**

Our key aims will be to:

### **7.1 Enhance organisational culture and manage productivity and performance effectively by:**

- Providing the optimum staffing structure for the organisation based on risk and resources.
- Promoting effective individual performance management as the foundation of organisational performance.
- Ensuring ongoing improvements against local and national people management performance indicators.
- Identifying and implementing best practice in working arrangements and staffing patterns.
- Identifying and working collaboratively with partners to provide the most effective support service to the organisation in both Training and Human Resources.
- Supporting the provision and development of the required skills and within the workforce to provide high quality and safe individual performance.

### **7.2 Build and maintain effective employee relations by:**

- Improving relations with staff groups that have been marginalised in the past such as staff on the retained duty system.
- Supporting an effective engagement and communication strategy for all employees.
- Promoting an effective dialogue between managers and employees, as the basis of the employment relationship in the workplace, and supporting managers when appropriate.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of employee relations procedures and to seek equity for all occupational groups.
- Ensuring that all staff are treated with respect and dignity and valued for their contribution in line with core organisational values.
- Eradicate inappropriate behaviour from the organisation.

### **7.3 Build and maintain effective industrial relations by:**

- Supporting and enhancing the existing effective local relationships with trade unions and apply appropriate procedures when required.
- 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 whenever possible.
- Promoting a business focused approach to managing consultation and negotiation.

### **7.4 Key Actions**

- Support the implementation of occupational leadership standards to promote organisational performance.
- Develop and monitor an enhanced set of people based performance indicators
- Maintain effective role within national and regional Human Resources networks to share best practice and develop modern HR policies and procedures.
- Continue to implement and review the effectiveness of new employee relations procedures.
- Support the management of appropriate conduct for all employees within BFRS to ensure positive behaviours in the workplace.
- Develop managers in industrial relations skills to support the revised consultation and negotiation procedures.
- Prioritise and programme revisions to local personnel policies and procedures.
- Review results of 2005 employee survey and initiate action where required.

## **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 functions to meet service needs by:**

- Identifying, continually assessing, and delivering risk critical training needs where trainer led training is most appropriate.
- Providing training materials where appropriate for managers to deliver to their staff in the workplace
- Ensuring the provision of an effective framework for staff development, including the continuing development of the Integrated Personal Development System.
- Ensuring that risk critical learning and development needs are prioritised with an appropriate emphasis on incident command.
- Enhancing the skills and abilities of staff to meet new operational and legal environments.
- Utilising the National Occupational Standards to reflect the modern role of the Brigade and its staff.
- Supporting the local implications of the FRS Learning and Development Strategy for England.
- Developing and maintaining effective individual 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.
- Developing an inclusive and positive culture that values diversity and challenges unacceptable behaviours.
- Developing the professional capacity to deliver effective learning and development.

## **8.2 Build capacity to meet service needs by:**

- Identifying the staff skill requirements to meet the needs identified within the Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- Supporting the development of effective managerial and technical skills at all levels to free up senior staff time and capacity.
- Explore the benefits of appropriate quality management systems, such as Investors in People.

## **8.3 Key Actions:**

- Deliver timely and appropriate Phase 1 Firefighter development training to new operational staff.
- Agree and deliver an effective operational skills delivery programme for existing staff prioritised in line with risk and continue to enhance facilities and resources for delivery.
- Ensure trainer led training is prioritised and focussed only on appropriate areas and develop line manager led training packages for other training needs.
- Provide development programme modules and workplace assessment arrangements for newly appointed managerial staff.
- Continue to develop Incident Command skills to officers using national best practice and emerging new areas e.g. Civil Contingencies legislation.
- Develop effective arrangements to monitor actual workplace performance in risk critical areas to inform future learning needs.
- Optimise regional collaboration arrangements to secure most efficient and effective training and development.
- Ensure new local training requirements e.g. those developed via the New Dimension programme, are appropriately specified and mainstreamed into operational skills/incident command delivery programmes.
- Implement an effective ICT training programme to staff
- Determine and provide other Training and Development to staff where required on request.

## **9. PRIORITY 4 - RESOURCING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Our key aims will be to:

### **9.1 Managing effective recruitment and progression by:**

- Providing and maintaining appropriate resources to continually and proactively attract staff to the retained duty system
- Providing and maintaining appropriate and timely training and development for new entrants
- Supporting the use of fair and transparent recruitment and promotion processes at all levels for all employee groups.
- Promoting collaborative approaches to recruitment and progression arrangements to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
- Exploring recruitment and retention initiatives for shortages in key skills.
- Establishing effective career development paths that meet the aspirations of potential and existing employees.

### **9.2 Attracting and retaining talented people by:**

- Promoting BFRS as an employer of choice for both full time and part time staff
- Encouraging recruitment and progression of talented individuals.
- 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

### **9.3 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 appropriate links with community groups and partner organisations.
- 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 BFRS as a career option amongst under-represented groups.

#### **9.4 Delivering effective Workforce Planning by:**

- Providing robust workforce planning arrangements and procedures.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of workforce planning at team and station level.
- Identifying future demographic and skills issues that will impact on the service.

#### **9.5 Key Actions:**

- Continue to develop staff establishment planning arrangements and ascertain future needs.
- Enhance the HR function to provide dedicated resources to attract retained duty system staff.
- Enhance the HR function to provide dedicated resources to recruitment activity.
- Review retained duty system staff deployment/employment practices and implement recommendations.
- Develop enhanced communication and engagement practices with retained duty system staff and the public to promote BFRS as an employer of choice for the whole community.
- Identify and implement organisational requirements for new Firefighter Selection Tests.
- Continue to resource effectively the control room function during development of Regional Control Centres.

## **10. PRIORITY 5 - RECOGNITION AND REWARD**

Our key aims will be to:

### **10.1 Provide effective pay and reward strategies by:**

- Implementing 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 a clear focus on outcomes
- Implementing nationally determined pay and reward agreements (e.g. Grey Book) effectively.
- Implementing changes to reward issues e.g. pension and compensation proposals in support of the needs of the service

**10.2 Developing conditions of service 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 arrangements, taking account of different conditions and negotiating bodies with the resources available

**10.3 Developing effective employment conditions by:**

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

**10.5 Key Actions:**

- Implement all local aspects of the 2004 revision to operational staff conditions of service and future issues e.g. CPD payments.
- Identify local implications of the 2007 pay and conditions negotiations.

## **11. PRIORITY 6 - DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF HR**

Our key aims will be to:

### **11.1 Strengthening the contribution of the HR function to BFRS by:**

- Developing the HR function to provide an appropriately resourced and skilled team
- Enhancing the quality of HR activity
- Enhancing the professional contribution of HR to the service.
- Demonstrating and promoting the added value of professional HR contributions to improved organisational performance.

### **11.2 Strengthening people management practice by:**

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

### **11.3 Maximising the contribution of HR by:**

- Providing arrangements to facilitating the sharing of best practice at local, regional and national level.
- Maintaining regional and national HR networks and undertaking projects at national and regional level.
- Exploring the most cost effective and innovative solutions to the delivery of HR services.
- Providing skills and capacity whenever possible to support achievement of organisational change.

### **11.4 Developing HR professionals by:**

- Promoting links and professional development to CIPD and other professional organisations, e.g. SOCPO, IDeA.
- Promoting and supporting appropriate professional standards and qualifications for HR staff.
- Supporting the professional development of HR staff in fire and rescue service specific issues and practices.

### **11.5 Key Actions:**

- Continue to enhance the staff resources of the HR team to ensure it is fit for purpose and can meet demands of organisation.
- Define revised Personnel team functions and responsibilities and communicate to organisation
- Ensure effective organisational planning and communication in relation to workload requests and demands based on agreed priorities.
- Review current status of HR Snowdrop IT system and plan longer term roll out.
- Continue to develop staff planning and forecasting arrangements.
- Ensure workload planning arrangements are communicated and maintained and seek enhanced strategic planning discipline from organisation.
- Explore departmental quality assurance systems