



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service

Workforce Strategy

A strategy for developing
and valuing our staff

2013-17

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Introduction

The Evolution of the Workforce Strategy

To fully understand this latest Workforce Strategy it is helpful to reflect on how it has evolved, based on the achievements and learning from the previous strategies. There have been two previous Workforce Strategies, the first covered 2007 to 2010 and the second covered 2010 to 2013. The first strategy focused on systems, and every HR and training procedure and system was reviewed. This saw huge improvements in areas such as succession planning, management skills, practical skills training such as live fire training, and the introduction of appraisal for all staff. This meant that the Authority had a workforce in place with the right skills and was sufficiently flexible to provide fire and rescue services when and where they were needed as a first building block for further change.

The second strategy focused on supporting the “Towards 2020” programme, which brought together a number of projects that review and bring about change in the way we deliver services. Whilst economic uncertainty was a driver, it has always been our aim that we remain business and service led so that overall service improvement could continue.

Under the Towards 2020 programme, proposals for the redesign of the Service to meet the demands of the 21st century were developed. This included in-depth analysis of data to ensure that we are able to match the right level of response in terms of stations and equipment to the risk in the area. In this phase we explored and laid down the second stage of building blocks around new ways of working. This included the transfer of employees working the retained duty system to a new contract-based on-call duty system, and introduced a pilot of annualised hours contracts. In addition, the Working Smarter initiative has removed unnecessary bureaucracy and released resources that could be utilised in more critical areas. These initiatives have been wide-ranging and have delivered savings. This all needed to be achieved in the context of pressures on funding.

We also completed a light fleet review designed to establish a more efficient and effective option for the transport of staff when undertaking business-related journeys. The new response and pool vehicle scheme has delivered more cost-effective transport arrangements applying to all Authority employees. More information on this is available in the **Caring for the Environment** strategy. The light fleet review also demanded a different way of working for some staff which we now need to develop further.

Where next?

The **Responding to Emergencies** Strategy is inextricably linked to the Workforce Strategy. It is concerned with being able to provide an emergency response by ensuring our resources are in the right place, at the right time and with the right equipment. This means making sure

our stations are in the best possible location and are staffed by the right number of people with the right type of skills.

The climate of reduced funding will continue to have an impact on us so in this third strategy we will continue to focus on:

- Introducing new ways of working so we can achieve efficient resourcing. This can only be delivered by having the right people, with the right skills, available when we need them, and having the right blend of employment packages in place for the workforce of the future. We have laid down some of the foundations for flexible ways of working for the future in the pilot of annualised hours contracts, and are exploring further options.
- The next iteration of our resourcing model will be contracts of employment characterised by flexibility, whilst ensuring we have resilience. It will maximise the skilled workforce that we already have and provide individuals with an opportunity to increase their earnings. With flexible contracts complemented by different equipment and alternative ways of getting firefighters to incidents, we can deliver a more cost effective resourcing model whilst maintaining resilience.
- Taking account of the impact this will have on our employees and maintaining training and support mechanisms, such as appraisal, to support people. We will continue to change working practices to ensure smarter working. The concept of smarter working is a principle that can impact on working arrangements across the whole organisation from minimising administrative processes to different ways of transporting firefighters to emergency incidents.
- Pressure on resources means that the decisions around staffing have been and will continue to be more challenging. This means we expect more from our managers in terms of skills, experience and accountability.

Following an external validation in April 2013, the Authority has been successful in achieving the Excellent level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework in terms of its performance and achievement in equality. Equality is part of what we do. Having an inclusive, positive and satisfying working environment and reaping the benefits of a diverse workforce is a high priority for us.

This third edition of our Workforce Strategy acknowledges that our people have a great capacity for change and want the characteristics of an organisation that has a modern workforce and is regarded as a good employer. We have listened to the views and ideas of our staff and managers through seminars, focus groups and surveys in formulating our third Workforce Strategy.

Workforce themes

There are five themes for the next three years. They also link to the workforce issues that arise from the other four strategies, and are discussed in the remainder of this document.

These workforce areas are:

- Organisational Development (inclusive of Succession Planning and Career Management)
- Learning and Development
- Flexible Resourcing and Workforce Planning
- The Employment Package
- Equality and Wellbeing

This document is intended to be for our partners, our auditors, interested members of the public and our own staff. Where we have used a technical term, we have defined it in a footnote.

Chapter one: Organisational Development

In this strategy, organisational development is focussed on taking a planned approach to continuously improving organisational performance through the involvement of its people. This encompasses organisational change, culture, managing performance, employee engagement and communication.

The principal focus for organisational development for the term of the strategy will be on performance management. This is not to undermine the considerable progress on the leadership and management of staff and teams during the significant organisational change that has taken place in recent years. That this change has been implemented as effectively as it has been is testimony to the development of staff in change management and leadership. The focus now needs to be on consolidating that progress and ensuring that both team and individual effectiveness is maximised. One of the constant issues for training is that staff sometimes feel that the knowledge and skills developed in the classroom are not easily applied. We will continue to strive to turn training and development into reality and practice.

This point is highlighted in the variance in evidence recorded and assessed on the competency recording system PDR Pro¹. All uniformed managers have been trained in the assessment of workplace competence but the application of the knowledge and skills learnt here suggests a wide variance of understanding. A programme to refresh these skills will be carried out to ensure that all uniformed managers develop their understanding of the assessment process.

In April 2011, we implemented a new geographical management structure. The new structure brought staff together into 19 clusters² based on who works together operationally most often. Above the clusters there are five Groups which deal with the resource management of the clusters, overseen by one manager. The new structure was designed to allow resources to be used in a more flexible and creative way to deliver services which meet local demand. This has been one of the building blocks that have allowed further thinking on new ways of working through use of different types of employment contracts to resource more flexibly at a local level. This is covered in more detail under flexible resourcing and workforce planning.

The new structure removed station managers from fire stations. This meant that watch managers took on enhanced accountability and discretion which many had previously sought. To support this transition we put in place additional support arrangements to help

¹ All uniformed staff keep a record of the training they have undertaken; alongside any experience they have had which provides evidence that they meet a number of attributes which we expect them to have, either in their current role, or the next one up if seeking promotion. It is recorded in a computer system called PDR Pro.

² A cluster is two or more stations which have been grouped based on those that most frequently work together. Two or more clusters form a 'group' for management purposes

develop our watch managers through coaching and guidance. This included investing time to ensure managers understand corporate issues and procedures such as procurement. Some have embraced this change while others have yet to fully adjust. The role is important and highly influential at a local level particularly around 'communicating the message' and embedding new ways of working. We will develop station benchmarking criteria as part of a performance management approach and identify where support may be needed watch by watch.

Another dimension at on-call stations has been the high level of vacancies of managerial roles. This is exacerbated by the very small pool of people locally on station who are either willing, or can demonstrate the skills needed, to carry out this role. To address this we will explore what alternatives exist to provide managerial support in different ways.

We have invested in communication and engagement arrangements particularly around the big change projects that have had staffing implications. This has been achieved through dedicated focus groups and robust consultation arrangements and we have seen the benefit of this. We have a focused monthly Managers' Briefing document which highlights the most current issues. We know however that 'comms' in any organisation is always an issue and for us there is an added dimension in terms of geography and on-call staff with little available time at the fire station. We need to look at how we cascade information and the use of technology to help us smooth information flow. This is discussed in more detail in the **Caring for the Environment** strategy.

The **Smarter Working** initiative has achieved the streamlining of processes by removing claim-based methods of payment and replacing them with consolidated pay arrangements. This ongoing approach is driven by efficiency and we will continue to strip out unnecessary bureaucracy and streamline processes. Beyond the changes already made, we will convert more processes from paper-based to electronic (or 'e') systems, such as appraisal, expenses and application forms. Smarter working also incorporates collaboration with other organisations to explore opportunities to work together which can maximise use of available resources or expertise for mutual benefit.

A new payroll contract and Human Resources (HR) system scheduled for 2014 will introduce further efficiencies in transactional HR processes.

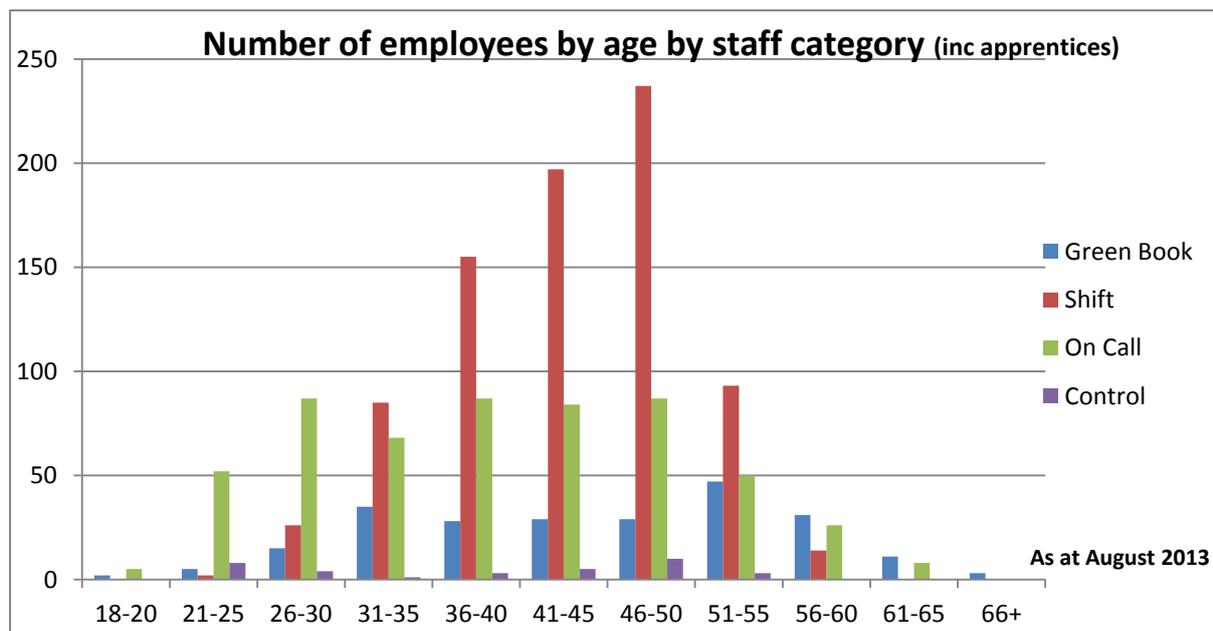
Smarter working places more emphasis on all employees being competent and confident in the use of the IT systems that are available to them to carry out their day to day roles. We have acknowledged that IT skills across the organisation vary hugely and have responded to this by establishing a small IT training team.

There are some areas where we feel processes are still challengeable in terms of cost and efficiency. They represent areas which may be more sensitive to any change but are increasingly difficult to defend. Over the last five years we have continued to make

improvements to the amount of time lost to sickness absence, but the overall cost to the Authority of long-term absence remains high .

The profile of the workforce has changed and is changing. Restructures and smarter working have meant that we have been able to delete a number of administration posts. However, we have seen an increase in specialist posts primarily as a result of the conversion of posts which have traditionally been Grey Book³ roles. This has been the case in our technical fire safety and community safety teams as the nature of their business has begun to shift. Whilst this can bring about a level of stability, as individuals increase their organisational knowledge and technical expertise, the risk of losing these staff to the wider labour market is greater than that of Grey Book staff who typically are less likely to move out of the organisation. As these teams have become more established in the organisation we have identified that their working pattern needs to align more closely with that of their stakeholders and related service users. Our ability to retain and attract new staff into these groups will be important to us.

The age profile of the workforce is getting older. The current profile is shown in the graph below.



There are a number of factors that contribute to this. We have not recruited full-time firefighters for four years. The only access to full-time positions during this time has been the migration of existing staff on the on-call duty system to full-time employment. A further factor is that individuals are not retiring when they are eligible to do so, and the removal of compulsory retirement ages means that they do not have to. The removal of compulsory

³ The Grey Book is the national scheme and conditions of employment used for uniformed staff, from which local fire and rescue services can agree local variations to meet local issues.

retirement ages brings uncertainty in terms of staff forecasting particularly during times of change when we want to protect the workforce from the risk of compulsory redundancy. Ongoing debate about reforms to public sector pension schemes may have led to some staff feeling apprehension about the future. However, a good proportion of employees will see the benefits they have already accrued protected under the current arrangements.

The concept of a job for life for the majority of our uniformed full-time staff remains strong. We also have many Green Book⁴ staff who are long serving employees. With normal retirement ages increasing, the age profile of the organisation is expected to increase further. We know that we have many employees who have chosen to be career firefighters and we need to ensure that they know they are recognised for their trade and skill.

Increased employee contributions to pension schemes could mean that employees regard membership of a pension scheme as less of a benefit than previously. This could lead to decisions from shorter serving employees to move to other types of employment.

Employee Survey - During the autumn of 2012 we conducted a range of focus groups designed to obtain an initial benchmark from staff in terms of perception, views and understanding across a range of HR areas. This information will be used to inform a staff survey during 2013. The early feedback from the workforce identified that there has been a lot of change and movement within the organisation and there is recognition that there is a lot more still to do with old views needing to be challenged. Engaging the workforce is crucial in developing and formulating proposals for new ways of working and delivery of services.

Performance management - We have continued to invest in performance appraisal recognising the importance of appropriate feedback. Listening to our staff helped us recognise that the processes that support promotion needed to be reviewed. This included breaking the link between appraisal and promotion, and clarifying what appraisal is for. We will build on the rigour that we already have in place around recruitment and the role that managers need to play in the overall process. We will now strengthen the tests of underpinning knowledge for everybody as part of the validation of competence. Ensuring that individuals participating in selection panels are skilled in evidence-based interviewing techniques will be an important focus in getting the right person for the job, particularly in the context of fewer opportunities being available for promotion in the future.

We need our managers to manage performance appropriately. We have good processes in place to enable managers to do this but these are not always being utilised when they should be. The closeness between staff on fire stations can make this challenging. We need to develop the maturity of the organisation in this respect which means that individuals must think carefully about when they may be ready to apply for jobs at a higher level and are

⁴ The Green Book refers to the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions issued by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. These staff can be found in front-line services such as community safety and technical fire safety, as well as support functions, but never include operational firefighters.

given straight feedback by their line manager about their readiness. The repositioning of local managers and increased frequency in which shift and on-call staff work together may give managers more confidence to do this.

The structural reviews that have taken place to date have meant that individual managers at all levels have had to take on more responsibility. To assist in the focusing of time and energy in the most appropriate and effective areas we will introduce station benchmarking across a suite of performance indicators. This is meant to focus managers' attention on those areas of performance that will have the greatest effect on team performance and so on service effectiveness. It will also ensure that all staff have a much clearer idea of what might reasonably be expected of them from a personal and team perspective.

The career succession planning process has been redeveloped and has seen the removal of the Initial Test of Potential (IToP) process. This has been made possible due to the quality of the application forms and appraisal process which has meant that greater reliance can be placed on line managers to decide when an applicant is ready for progression. The process for assessing development needs will continue to take place but the focus will move to providing more workplace-related development in addition to the more formal and structured development programmes and courses. This approach will make greater use of the coaching and mentoring programme. This will be opened up to include all staff that it is felt would benefit from this form of workplace support to improve effectiveness. The range of coaching programmes will be increased to make them as flexible as possible to suit individual needs.

Health and Safety Management: The Authority has a strong health and safety culture which places the health, safety and welfare of staff and members of the public at the heart of all of its activity. We have strong processes in place to ensure our obligations around health and safety are met. We will continue to benchmark and invite challenge of our processes through the regional audit arrangements and integrate related training needs through the organisational training plan.

The Authority's Health and Safety Framework has been revised to include arrangements for significant safety events which now see all senior managers being trained to take a role in events that have an Authority-wide impact. The health and safety of colleagues will continue to be a priority for all staff, and the development and delivery of the processes needed to ensure this will continue to be assessed.

All staff now have health and safety training delivered as part of their induction to the organisation. We will continue to make sure that all our managers regularly keep their health and safety knowledge up to date and will develop this further to include all managers. The safety of our staff is critical in all our activity and so the ongoing process of ensuring that all our risk assessments, whether they are for operational or station-based activity, or for staff working at their desks, is maintained and developed appropriately.

What are we going to do?

- Streamline and refine processes which support promotion and strengthen the manager's role within this.
- Communicate the concept of 'invitation to apply' for promotion opportunities.
- Develop an 'expert pool' of individuals to participate in selection panels.
- Respond to issues arising from review of group structures to ensure fit for local needs.
- Develop ongoing opportunities for the conversion of processes to 'e' systems.
- Following analysis of the staff survey results, develop recommendations to address and promote findings.
- Tighten the management of long-term sickness arrangements.
- Explore options to address the gap in managerial support needed at part-time stations.
- Develop a Station Benchmarking approach.
- Develop a handbook for first time managers.
- Provide support and training to individuals to perform well as managers.
- Enhance the individual performance management framework to operate effectively.
- Create opportunities for staff at station and corporate level to experience a 'day in the life' of the other.
- Maximise the opportunity to remove and minimise the administration around transactional HR processes through the implementation of a new HR and Payroll system.
- Initiate opportunities for retirement planning earlier in career.
- Introduce induction resource for new managers.
- Implement findings of the external Health and Safety Audit.
- Explore opportunities with partners around collaborative working which enable resources or expertise to be maximised.
- Promote the purpose of appraisal and relationship between manager and employee.

Chapter two: Employee Development and Training

We must acknowledge that in an environment where demand for our core service is reducing, the opportunity for firefighters to experience the whole range of firefighting and emergency scenarios is reduced. To ensure that firefighters are able to apply the appropriate skills when required, we need to create opportunities for experiential learning. This also applies to our incident commanders who need to have the confidence to apply their taught skills when the situation requires it.

The use of e-learning to deliver information and assess underpinning knowledge will be increased to reduce the need for staff to travel away from their usual place of work for training. The recent introduction of new IT will improve the ability to stream information and video. We will take courses to stations wherever possible to reduce the need to travel long distances and reduce time away from the workplace. This will allow us to reduce the duration of courses wherever possible to maximum of four days, so that staff are not required to work on their rota days. More information on this is available in the **Caring for the Environment** strategy.

Operational Effectiveness: We need to continually focus on the development of operational effectiveness. This will include planning for emergencies, local and service-wide exercises, and the development and implementation of operational procedures and equipment. Further details of this aspect are discussed in the '**Responding to Emergencies**' strategy.

We will focus on ensuring that operational staff have the necessary core operational skills, knowledge and understanding to establish effective performance on the incident ground. Those core skills are:

- Command and control – fireground principles and safe systems of work.
- Water safety.
- Working at height.
- Search and Rescue – Breathing Apparatus.
- Hazardous materials and environments.
- Rescue techniques.
- Casualty care - development of and enhancement of emergency life support skills.
- Designing e-based tests of underpinning knowledge for operational crews.

The establishment of these core skills is delivered through the current trainee programme which follows a regionally-agreed programme. This programme will be developed further to allow the training to take place within Groups and at station level.

Currently the refreshing of those core skills is undertaken through a refresher programme that sees all relevant operational staff undertake one-day courses in each area over a 2/3

year period according to the risk assessment. We will review the re-accreditation and refresher programme to develop a more effective way to deliver it, whilst minimising the time away from station, e.g. a four day consolidated course to be undertaken every two years to ensure that all operational staff maintain and develop their core skills. We will develop our ability to ensure that all operational staff can evidence their technical knowledge of Standard Operating Procedures and use of equipment through e-based tests following training input. This process will be extended to develop an annual test of operational and command procedures and processes for incident commanders at all levels.

We will work with local managers and use learning from the operational quality assurance (QA) system to develop an exercising and audit process that ensures that our staff are ready to respond to any emergency.

Incident Command Training: We have a comprehensive command training programme. The focus in this strategy is on developing the tactical and situational awareness of incident commanders and the operational decisions that they make. A command training programme has been developed that will see every manager involved in the management of incidents taking part in exercises regularly, and then assessed to maintain and develop their competence. This will make sure that we have a much more integrated and tactical approach to the use of the emerging new technologies discussed in the **Responding to Emergencies** strategy. Managers will be regularly revalidated to make sure that they continue to have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to operate effectively. Greater emphasis will be placed on developing experience and on succession planning within the operational command rotas so that we make sure we have the resilience and capacity to deal with any eventuality. This will include working with other agencies within the Kent Resilience Forum.

Specific areas of focus will include:

- Suitable risk assessments – leading to safe systems of work.
- Appropriate training – for hazards likely to be encountered.
- Ability to respond to operational demands – including rapidly changing situations.
- Staff to be appropriately equipped.
- Adequate supervision – particularly within the command and control structure.
- Ability to address dynamic risks – with dynamic decisions ‘as far as reasonably practicable’.
- Incident command – ensure a consistent approach to competence, training and monitoring.
- Risk information – proportionality and more training needed on capturing risk information.

Water Safety training: Kent is, according to the National Flood Risk Register, at a high risk from flooding. We have developed our flood risk capability significantly over the last four

years with a comprehensive water safety training programme. We will develop this further with the introduction of specialist water safety subject matter advisors to enhance the effective use and coordination of any flooding-related incidents that we may attend.

Emergency Life Support: Following the 'Review of Emergency Response Provision' we are now undertaking a fundamental review of our operational capability. Whilst there is more detail of this project in the **Responding to Emergencies** Strategy, this coincides with a review of life-saving skills. We have always been very effective at administering emergency life support to those in need but the focus has been on how we support casualties at non-fire situations. In support of our ambulance colleagues, we will increase our ability to support the victims of burns more effectively to improve their life chances and speed of recovery. We will develop the 'casualty centred approach' for all of those people to whom we may be called to render emergency life support.

Training and Exercising: Training coordinators assist stations to plan and deliver their training and have been very successful. This process will now be developed further to move from training at individual stations to training across a cluster. This will then be used to deliver the group and service-wide exercise programme, that will see each group hold a major exercise each year on one of their principal risks plus two County-wide major exercises.

What are we going to do?

- Make sure that our staff continue to maintain and develop their core operational skills.
- Develop the incident command training and assessment processes.
- Develop the Operational Quality Assurance process to ensure we learn as much as possible from operational incidents
- Explore the available technology and then make sure staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to deliver a fire and rescue service as effectively as possible.
- Work with health colleagues to develop our emergency life support capability to maximise the life chances of the casualties we attend.
- Develop more efficient training and exercise programmes that maximise the training time available to front-line staff.
- Develop the use of e-learning to make learning easier for staff and reduce their time away from the workplace.
- Review the length of courses so that staff working differing duty systems are not required to work on their days off.
- Make sure that staff receive the specialist training necessary for us to respond to the wide range of emergencies faced by the people of Kent and Medway.

Chapter three: The Employment Package

We have already identified that the shape of the workforce has changed over the last five years and that it will continue to do so. Being an employer of choice goes beyond having a good package of pay and conditions; it's about having a reputation for delivery of high quality services which are highly regarded by the public.

Our intended staff survey will seek to establish how the workforce rates the Authority as an employer. A straw poll of managers taken in the autumn of 2012 indicated that over 80% rated the Authority as a good employer.

We need to ensure that the structures and policies we have in place for pay, reward and conditions of employment are aligned to the type of staff we now have and that we need to attract in the medium term.

The majority of our workforce are covered by a framework of pay and conditions of service negotiated through national collective agreements. The principles of this framework have, in broad terms, been sound in supporting a workforce that has not changed significantly over a number of years. However, as we and other authorities have sought to deliver services in a different way, while we have achieved much through local agreement, we have increasingly found the nationally-agreed terms and conditions of employment acting as a constraint.

We have worked with the National Framework of role maps for uniformed roles but recognised early on that the role maps did not support the roles that we were using in Kent. This mismatch has now been recognised nationally but the pace at which it is being corrected is not quick enough for Kent.

We have been successful in moving to different types of contracts as a way of providing flexibility to the organisation and to staff. The biggest change was the transfer of our staff working the retained duty system to On-Call contracts. In making this change we worked within the framework of the national terms and conditions, but in refining the new contract arrangements as a resourcing model, we will increasingly be challenged by the Grey Book principles. Our relationship with the bodies representing our staff continues to be positive and we have experienced few industrial relations problems. However, local agreements and negotiations have been characterised by a level of generosity on our part. Within the context of tighter resources, and with the need for continuing to develop new ways of working, negotiations will become more challenging.

The shape of the workforce has also changed in terms of the type of Green Book staff we employ. Over the last five years as a result of smarter working initiatives we have seen a reduction in the number of pure administration staff but have seen an increase in the number of specialist staff. This is also characterised by the number of staff we have transferred from Grey to Green Book conditions of employment. The last five years has presented challenges

in terms of recruitment to specialised staff, with pay and reward often cited as the barrier to success in this area. This has led to increased costs in trying to recruit successfully to some Green Book posts.

We have previously benchmarked our pay and reward structure against other sectors to establish whether it remains competitive in the market. The use of job evaluation methodologies achieve internal differentials and offer protection against equal pay claims. However, this can present internal challenges when compared to the wider job market. The changes in the shape of the workforce suggest that the pay structure and its supporting job evaluation and grading framework should be reviewed as they have not changed for over a decade.

Under the umbrella of smarter working, 'clean pay' remains a principle. This is pay which is not cluttered by additional allowances - these are consolidated into pay where appropriate. This also includes continuing to harmonise conditions of service across all categories of staff where possible.

The concept of local terms and conditions has begun to emerge from Government as a way forward. The concept of national pay awards and the impact that these can impose on authorities who cannot afford them is now emerging as a real challenge. As a result, the idea of local pay negotiations, based on affordability and need, is now evolving.

We have done a lot of work to harmonise conditions of service where possible. Through our Establishment Planning Group we are mindful of the equal pay challenges that can emerge from decisions around whether a post should be Green or Grey Book. At the most senior level the distinction between Green and Grey book is harder to define. These challenges have led to us to consider whether the pay and conditions of service for these roles should be harmonised and sit outside of the national framework.

In 2011 we introduced a pay structure to support On-Call contracts whilst still retaining the principles of Grey Book pay. Following introduction of the new contracts, it emerged that the pay structure is not operating as efficiently as it could. It retains some of the complexities of the previous arrangements and needs to be reviewed.

We have explored the concept of Total Reward and will develop this approach further. Total Reward covers all the elements that employees value in working for their employer, such as work/life balance, training and development opportunities. In the context of little or no pay increases over the last two years Total Reward can include ways of helping to make pay go further, such as arranging staff discount schemes.

We have identified that we need to achieve the right balance in Service Orders and procedures to achieve an appropriate level of compliance and consistency in application, with managerial discretion as appropriate.

What are we going to do?

- Review the Green Book Pay Structure to identify whether it is effective in attracting applicants and rewarding good staff. (This includes considering the practical application of the Job Evaluation scheme and whether existing grade thresholds remain sound.)
- Consider options for the harmonisation of pay and conditions of senior managers. This includes the harmonisation of pay and conditions to a local scheme supported by a generic job evaluation scheme. This also includes top tier managers who are on two different pay structures.
- Review and implement revised On-Call pay arrangements.
- Review allowances.
- Review relevant Service Orders and procedures to ensure clarity of application so that compliance and consistency can be maintained.
- Implement preferential discount scheme for staff.

Chapter four: Flexible Resourcing and Workforce Planning

The scope of the Towards 2020 programme extends to how we deliver services to the community and how the organisation runs on a daily basis. This includes two important projects, the Operational Capability review and Variable Crewing. These two projects explore different ways of working that aim to bring about service improvement and efficient resourcing models through the use of equipment and people. These will remain important project areas over the forthcoming three to five years.

The Workforce Strategy plays an active part in delivering against these projects.

A significant aspect these projects was the need to explore new ways of working and deploying resources more flexibly. We have already implemented procedures that were developed to enable the transfer of Retained Duty employees to new 'On-Call' contracts. In broad terms one of the many factors influencing this organisational change was the need to facilitate integration and parity of conditions of service between whole-time and part-time firefighters. In addition ensuring that their contracts provided adequate time for firefighters to maintain the core skills necessary to engage in safe firefighting was crucial.

The transfer to the new contractual arrangements has represented a significant shift in the contractual relationship with 'On-Call' employees. An important difference for employees has been the perceived loss of flexibility previously enjoyed by the retained workforce because the new contracts are focused around a tighter guarantee of availability. A level of flexibility is still available to employees but within a managed framework. This has demanded adjustment by employees to a new way of working which has taken time to bed down. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that 'On-Call' firefighters actually prefer knowing when they are to be available. This is in contrast to the old contracts where retained staff felt under pressure to be constantly available to the Authority whilst still having to meet the demands of their primary employer and their family.

To further enhance the availability of staff at the right time and in the right place, annualised contracts have also been developed. Against a revised cover model a further consideration is to explore the alternative ways of working used by other services to meet specific resourcing needs and the extent to which these have been effective in terms of cost and resilience.

The way in which staff have provided emergency cover has largely been unchanged for many years. The recent analysis has highlighted that we did not have the flexibility to ensure that our staff would be available where and when we needed them. The transfer of staff working the retained duty system to On-Call contracts was a significant step in laying down foundations for employment contracts to meet changing demands. Since doing this we have been able to identify how the On-Call resourcing model can be refined to be more efficient

and cost-effective. This includes managing more effectively the matching of staff's availability to the needs of the Service.

We have identified that the use of historical formulas for resourcing individual stations and fire engines is no longer the most efficient way of delivering the service. In our planning to adjust to reduced resources, and in recognition that we would want to adjust our resources in order to meet demand in a different way, we have not recruited new whole-time firefighters in recent years. A principle in the development of our resource model is making more flexible use of our existing staff. Other fire and rescue services have already moved to a model which provides firefighters to match the demand. The Operational Capability Review is exploring the possibilities of using new types of equipment and new ways of getting to and from incidents. We have identified the type of contracts we need to support flexible working patterns and which are affordable, and we will now develop these further to deliver alongside the **Responding to Emergencies** strategy.

We will look to release spare capacity that may exist on a day to day basis in one area and reallocate it elsewhere. This is particularly relevant within the cluster set-up where resources can be moved around within a local area to provide the right cover when and where it is needed.

We are using more complex methods to determine where gaps in our resources are likely to occur and then tap into the resources we have elsewhere in order to fill the gap.

This is based on the principle that we will not have the resources to recruit new full-time firefighters in the next three to four years but that we will utilise the firefighters we already have more efficiently and flexibly. This includes getting our existing trained workforce to do more. We know that, within their existing working patterns, firefighters want to undertake more work during their rota days. We will provide for this, subject to the provisions of the Working Time Regulations on rest and leave. We have already made greater use of our existing firefighters through the use of the temporary annualised contracts. This has been largely successful, but at a cost.

We want different types of staff to work together on station and at incidents in a highly integrated way. However this does raise other issues around clarity of line management responsibility and planning.

We want to tighten and strengthen procedures around firefighters booking annual leave and time off in lieu, as local practices have led to inconsistent application.

We acknowledge the impact that staff taking temporary roles can have across the organisation, often resulting in prolonged temporary arrangements and additional cost. Whilst temporary moves do provide the opportunity for employees to raise their profile and get exposure in new areas, we will explore other ways of covering roles which do not have

such a detrimental impact at local level, and we will avoid the use of acting-up (where an employee takes on a more senior role on a temporary basis).

We have reviewed the Service Order on Annual Leave for Grey Book staff to provide clarity and remove ambiguity about entitlement on how and when it can be taken. We will move to a clear planned leave approach which works with our resourcing model, not against it.

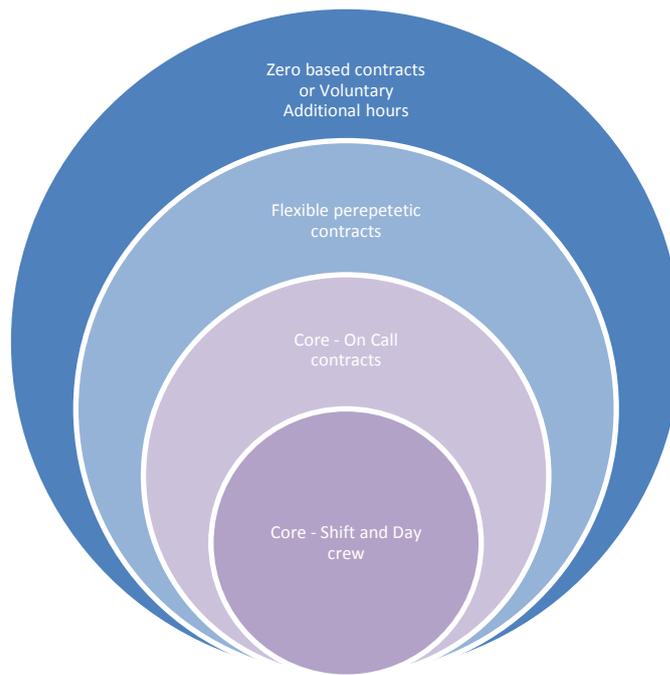
Leave, time off in lieu, detached duties, and different and flexible duty systems do not operate in isolation but form a package to improve availability of resources. However, we need to take this a step further to develop a resourcing model that will be flexible enough to meet day to day demand but also retains a level of resilience to meet exceptional operational demand. The ways of working set out below reflect the broad contractual arrangements that will make up the resourcing model to meet operational requirements.

Figure 1 below illustrates how our operational resourcing model can be viewed as a number of layers in combination to provide a level of guaranteed resilience and flexibility to meet changing levels of demand.

Flexible working is not limited to our operational needs. The Community Safety (CS) Team has evolved significantly in terms of to whom and where they target their resources. The activities of this team are no longer best serviced by the five-day week, 9 to 5 employee. The delivery of CS activity needs to be at times that suit the public and this is probably at weekends and in the evenings.

We have operated a flexitime scheme for Green Book staff for many years. Whilst this is seen as a benefit to staff, it is inconsistently used and applied across this group of staff. There is therefore a need to review the scheme to ensure that it works effectively for the organisation and the employee.

Figure 1 Resourcing Model



What are we going to do?

- Develop the Central Resourcing team to become a specialised resourcing function.
- Continue to refine the On-Call duty arrangements and maximise effectiveness of this system of working.
- Refine the On-Call contractual agreement process around matching availability with Service needs.
- Develop and implement the availability of a staff resource who work on a peripatetic basis.
- Create an opportunity for existing firefighters to undertake additional hours on a voluntary basis at flat rate or through zero-hours based contracts.
- Utilise more effectively scope for detached duty, balanced crewing and overtime.
- Review 'Flexitime' time scheme for Green Book employees.
- Promote a planned approach to leave from the workplace and embed efficiencies around management of time.
- Develop and implement alternative options to meet temporary needs.
- Consider shift duty systems which push the margins or extend beyond the scope of the Grey Book where evidence suggests we need to.

Chapter five: Equality and Diversity and Wellbeing at Work

Following a validation in 2008 the Authority has remained committed to working towards the higher levels of achievement of the Fire Service Equality Framework.

Ensuring an environment where staff are comfortable about who they are, are treated with dignity and respect, and that recognises the value that difference can bring to the organisation, continues to be a strong thread. Increasing the number of women and black and ethnic minority staff remains one of our equality objectives. Low recruitment has constrained opportunities to increase our uniformed workforce in terms of the protected characteristics such as race and gender. Opportunities for recruitment will continue to be lower than in previous years, but there will be scope through On-Call and Green Book contracts to attract applicants in these groups. However, we continue to operate two independent staff groups on disability and sexual orientation issues in support of existing staff.

It is predicted that by 2030 people over 50 will comprise almost one-third of the workforce and half of the population. It is acknowledged that working longer is good for the economy and the individual. The Government wants people to maximise their income in retirement, it is good for wellbeing and keeping pensions sustainable. However, there is a negative attitude towards older workers and this potentially presents issues for the employer. We need to understand the impact that an older workforce may have. Equally it is acknowledged that young people are currently being locked out of the labour market. An ageing workforce contributes to perpetuating this issue, and having a more balanced workforce in terms of age would assist. At this point there is still no national agreement on tapering arrangements for existing firefighters, but retirement at 60 is agreed as part of the 2006 pension scheme.

The Government has expressed its ongoing concern about the recession and its impact on young people in different ways. The aim is that young people are actively engaged in productive activity, be it at work, volunteering or training. The suggestion is that local government has a role to play in creating opportunities for young people to engage. We already have an Apprenticeship Scheme which we will continue to deliver. We have a Volunteer Scheme which includes a number of people under the age of 20. We have also developed a FireFit programme in partnership with local communities which involves firefighters and volunteers using a range of sporting and cultural activities targeted at young people designed to engage and promote socially-responsible behaviours.

What are we going to do?

- Ensure we understand what it means to get older in the workplace and the impact this has on employees.
- Consider the increased availability of staff working from home, where appropriate, as a benefit to the individual and the organisation.
- Work to meet our equality and diversity objectives in terms of increasing the number of women and black and ethnic minority staff in the workplace.
- Consider ways in which all employees can retire from the organisation more flexibly.
- Explore options which create opportunities for bringing younger workers into the organisation through the Apprenticeship Scheme and volunteers.

Summary of equality profile information relating to Service employees.

Number and percentage of employees (broken down by employee type) who have declared themselves as disabled.	Operational Green Book Total	28 (2.0%) 11 (4.6%) 39 (2.4%)
Number and percentage of employees (broken down by employee type) that are women.	Operational Green Book Total	78 (5.7%) 138 (57.3%) 216 (13.3%)
Number and percentage of employees (broken down by employee type) who have declared themselves as being from an ethnic minority origin.	Operational Green Book Total	31 (2.3%) 14 (5.8%) 45 (2.8%)
Percentage of employees (broken down by employee type) who have disclosed their faith or religion.	Operational Green Book Total	72% 87.1% 75%
Proportion of employees who have disclosed their sexual orientation.		49.0%
Number and percentage of senior management roles that are held by women.		15 (26.3%)

Definitions:

* A senior management role is defined as a uniformed employee at group manager level and above and Green Book employees at Grade 8 and above.

Operational – Operational staff consist of all Grey Book staff and some Green Book staff (staff that do not wear a uniform) whose roles are front line service delivery, eg, Fire Safety Officers, Youth Diversion Officers.

August 2013