

## Wholetime Recruitment

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton, Chief Fire Officer, or Germaine Worker, Head of Human Resources and Administration on 01743 260201.

#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with an update on the recent recruitment programme for wholetime firefighters.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to

- a) Consider the contents of the report; and
- b) Agree the recommendations for the next steps, as set out in section 8 of the report.

#### 3 Background

In November 2017, it was agreed by Standards and Human Resources Committee that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) would hold a recruitment campaign for wholetime firefighters using the Fire Service College's online recruitment module.

It was decided that, to encourage diversity, both full time and part time posts would be advertised for the vacant posts.

The campaign opened on 29 January 2018 and the process concluded on 16 April 2018 with 10 new recruits being offered conditional offers of employment to commence on 26 April 2018.

Despite a higher than average number of female applicants reaching the final stages, these applicants were not successful through to interview and ultimately the top ten candidates who were offered positions consisted of 1 BME candidate and 1 part time candidate. The remaining eight candidates are all white males.

## 4 Summary of Campaign

SFRS follow the National Firefighter selection process, which was developed in 2010 to standardise selection for new Firefighter recruits across all fire and rescue services (FRS). Since then, many FRSs have deviated from the standard process, making adjustments to suit their local needs. The following review of the campaign will determine if SFRS should make local adjustments to maximise opportunities to improve diversity in its recruit selection processes.

The campaign opened on 29 January 2018, and the closing date for initial registration and application was 4 February 2018. At the point of closing, 746 individuals had registered on the system. 14.6% of these applicants were female, 3.2% were BME, and 2.1% had applied under the job share contract.

The following section has been broken down into six sub-sections, one for each element of the campaign up to and including the job related tests.

### **Registration**

The campaign attracted a total of 746 applicants. 14.6% (109) were female, 3.2% (24) were BME, and 2.1% (16) were candidates applying for under the job share contract.

### **Application**

94.5% (103) of the female candidates registered completed the application and 98.1% (101) of these candidates were successful. 100% of the BME applicants completed the application and 91.7% (22) were successful. 100% of the candidates applying under job share completed the application and 93.8% (15) were successful.

8 female candidates were lost at this stage. 2 failed the eligibility section of the application form and 6 failed to complete it. 2 of the BME candidates failed the eligibility section, and 1 job share applicant failed to complete the application form.

### **Assessment One: Behavioural Styles Questionnaire**

On progressing to this stage, 93.1% (94) of the female applicants completed the Behavioural Styles Questionnaire and 72.3% (68) were successful. 95.5% (21) of the BME candidates completed the assessment and 71.4% (15) were successful. 80% (12) of the job share applicants completed the assessment and 75% (9) were successful.

33 female candidates were lost at this stage. 26 were unsuccessful at this assessment and 7 failed to complete the assessment. 7 BME applicants were lost. 6 were unsuccessful at the assessment and 1 failed to complete the assessment. 6 job share applicants were lost, with 3 being unsuccessful at the assessment and 3 failing to complete it.

## **Assessment Two: Situational Judgement Test**

On progressing to this stage, 97.1% (66) of the female candidates completed the Situational Judgement Test and 83.3% (55) were successful. 66.7% (14) of the BME candidates completed the assessment and 42.9% (9) were successful. All of the eligible job share applicants completed the test and 77.8% (7) were successful.

13 female applicants were lost at this stage, with 11 being unsuccessful and 2 failing to complete the test. 6 BME candidates were lost, 5 being unsuccessful and 1 failing to complete the test. 2 job share applicants were lost both being unsuccessful at the test.

## **Assessment Three: Ability Tests**

The Ability Tests consisted of two parts; Verbal Reasoning and Numerical Reasoning.

80.3% (53) of the eligible female applicants completed these assessments, and 92.5% (49) were successful. All of the eligible BME candidates undertook the tests, and 88.9% (8) were successful. All of the eligible job share applicants completed the tests, and 100% of them were successful.

6 female applicants were lost at this stage. 4 were unsuccessful and 2 failed to complete the tests. 1 BME candidate was lost by failing the tests. No job applicants applying under job share were lost.

## **Job Related Tests**

A top slice of 140 candidates were taken through to the job related tests stage. This was approximately 50% of all eligible applicants. This consisted of 24 female applicants, 3 BME applicants and 6 job share applicants.

Of the 24 female candidates, 58.3% (14) attended for the tests. Only one female candidate passed the job related tests. All of the eligible BME candidates attended and all successfully completed the tests. 50% (3) of the job share candidates invited attended, only one was successful.

We lost 23 female applicants at this stage. 2 withdrew themselves from the test on the day, 11 undertook the tests but were unsuccessful in completing them all successfully, and 10 female candidates failed to respond/attend on the day. We lost none of the BME candidates. We lost 2 of the job share applicants, who were not successful at completing the job related tests.

We took a further top slice for invite to interview, taking 40 candidates through. The one female candidate who was successful at job related tests did not score high enough on the written assessments to progress to interview. Of the 3 BME candidates, only one scored high enough to progress. The job share applicant was successful in gaining a place at interview.

Following the interviews, both the BME and job share candidate were successful in gaining a place on the recruits course. We took 10 candidates through, consisting of 1 BME candidate, 1 job share candidate, and 8 white male candidates.

Appendix A shows a breakdown of the data from the 2018 campaign.

## 5 Positive Action Undertaken

Prior to the recruitment campaign going live, a number of positive action initiatives were undertaken. Muhammad Younis, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer, visited a number of mosques, temples, BME community centres and female only gyms to promote the role of a firefighter.

Four taster sessions were also held. Candidates attended the Training and Development Centre and were presented with information on the role of a firefighter and given the opportunity to ask questions about both the role, and the process of the campaign.

A comprehensive Candidate Information Booklet was made available via the Service's website which explained the process in its entirety and included a number of links to other websites for further information on the role, the job related tests, the interview, and the standards of fitness required.

The Candidate Information Booklet also included sample questions for the Behavioural Styles Questionnaire and the Situational Judgement Test. We put links on our website to practice tests for the Verbal and Numerical Reasoning Tests so candidates could get a feel for what the tests would involve when they commenced the process.

## 6 Current Staff Make-up

Below is a breakdown of the Service's current employee make-up including the 10 new recruits who have just commenced employment.

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>BME</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
<b>Fire Control</b>	6	14	0	1
<b>Retained</b>	314	21	0	NA
<b>Non-Uniform</b>	31	46	3	18
<b>Wholetime</b>	173	9	3	3

## 7 Conclusions

Overall the campaign ran well. Using the Fire Service College platform reduced the level of resources required by the Human Resources Department, as the College undertook all the administration and facilitation of the online process.

We had only one complaint about the process, relating to the automated emails sent by the College. This has now been rectified with the complainant, and going forward we will ensure that all communications are made clear in all communications.

The agreed recruitment target area worked well with only two candidates in our cohort of new recruits living outside of Shropshire. We also received a good response to the job share contract option.

In the 2018 campaign, the percentage of female applicants who registered increased from the 2016 campaign, as did the percentage of female applicants whose applications were successful. The figures for BME remained roughly the same across both campaigns.

Data from the two campaigns relating to the online assessments cannot accurately be compared, and the 2016 campaign opened all four assessments at the same time so candidates could complete the assessments in the order they preferred. The 2018 campaign had staged assessments and candidates could only complete one assessment at a time and if unsuccessful, did not progress to the next assessment.

During the online assessments, we lost a high level of female applicants at the Behavioural Styles Questionnaire, with 26 being unsuccessful at that stage. The level of BME candidates failing the online assessment stages remained somewhat consistent over all assessments.

Within the top slice for candidates progressing to job related tests, a higher level of female applicants were in the top slice in the 2018 campaign compared to the 2016 campaign, and a slightly higher percentage attended.

The next stage where a high level of female applicants were lost was at the job related tests. 12 candidates undertook the tests and only one was successful. The tests that the female candidates struggled with were the Equipment Carry Test and Ladder Lift Simulator. This is a significant drop when compared to the 2016 campaign, where 60% of the female candidates successfully completed the job related tests.

A reason for this could be the way in which the taster sessions were held. In the 2016 campaign, potential applicants attended a taster session and were able to partake in the physical tests. In the 2018 campaign, potential applicants attended and were able to observe the tests being carried out as opposed to carrying them out themselves.

The reasons behind changing the structure of the taster sessions was to allow more potential applicants to attend. In the 2016 campaign, spaces available on the taster sessions were limited due to potential applicants undertaking the physical tests on the day. By removing that element, we were able to open up more places at the taster days in 2018, attracting more people.

This change in structure may have been a factor in the failure of our female applicants at the job related tests. By undertaking the practical tests at the taster sessions, we may have better prepared applicants in our 2016 campaign.

However, the figures do show that not only did we have had a higher percentage of female applicants apply in the 2018 campaign, we also had a higher percentage of female applicants successful at the application stage. This could be attributed to there being more places on the taster sessions for potential female applicants to attend, the extensive information available in the Candidate Information pack, and the structure of the taster sessions, allowing potential applicants to ask specific questions about the campaign and the requirements and standards associated with the online process.

There was a high number of female candidates who failed to respond, or did not attend, for the job related tests. We are aware that at least two of these applicants were false applications.

In order to ascertain the reasons behind this, a recommendation is for the EDI Officer to contact all female applicants who either failed to respond to emails, or responded but then did not attend the job related tests, to ascertain why they chose to withdraw themselves from the process. This information can then be used in future positive actions initiatives, taster sessions, and can be used to amend any future campaigns in such a way as to encourage female applicants to complete the process.

Although the figures of female firefighters progressing to the final stages is low, the positive action at the beginning of the process provided a slightly higher percentage of female applicants engaging in the process than the 2016 campaign. We also engaged more potential female and BME applicants in attending the taster sessions, however there were more places available in the 2018 taster sessions than the 2016, as the EDI Officer amended the process.

## **8 Recommendations**

In the first instance, for the EDI Officer to make contact with the female applicants who failed to complete, or attend, the different stages of the campaign to ascertain why they did not progress with their application with a view to amending our campaign to maintain the female candidates throughout all stages of the process

In order to counteract the poor diversity in our current cohort, we are looking to run a further, condensed campaign, with a recruit course to take place in early 2019.

The plan is to revisit the data supplied by the Fire Service College, and commence a campaign from the job related test stage, inviting back all applicants who were successful at the online assessments.

The timescales for the 2018 campaign were somewhat restricted. In order to allow sufficient positive action to be undertaken, the date the campaign was originally scheduled to open had to be postponed. Unfortunately the recruit course could not be put back in line with this, which reduced the amount of time between each stage.

For any future campaign it is recommended that preparatory work is undertaken as soon as possible to allow more time between each stage to maintain positive action throughout all stages of the process, as opposed to only at the start, and giving candidates more time between each stage to prepare.

To try and assist candidates prior to undertaking the job related tests, we propose to do preparatory work beforehand to help candidates understand the level of fitness required to successfully complete the tests. The proposal would be to run 'mock' job related tests for these applicants to undertake and then, in conjunction with Occupational Health and Chris Bonell, Fitness Instructor, give candidates an 8 week fitness programme to assist them in preparing for the final job related tests.

We will also draw up a mechanism to enable us to shortlist applicants from the job related tests down to interview. This could either be a tool for scoring the job related tests, or by putting in place an assessment to be carried out during the tests to shortlist applicants.

## **9 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report

## **10 Legal Comment**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **11 Initial Impact Assessment**

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **12 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **13 Appendix**

Breakdown of Statistical Data

## **14 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.

### Breakdown of Statistical Data

2016 Campaign			2018 Campaign			
	Female	BME		Female	BME	Job Share
<b>Total Registered Overall (1541)</b>	12.1% (187)	2.5% (38)	<b>Total Registered (746)</b>	14.6% (109)	3.2% (24)	2.1% (16)
<b>The following percentages are worked out against the total number of female / BME successful applications at each stage, NOT against the overall totals</b>						
<b>Total Completed Applications</b>	99.5% (186)	100% (38)	<b>Total Completed Applications</b>	94.5% (103)	100% (24)	100% (16)
<b>Total Applications Successful</b>	85% (159)	89.5% (34)	<b>Total Successful Applications</b>	98.1% (101)	91.7% (22)	93.8% (15)
<b>Total Unsuccessful Applications</b>	14.4% (27)	10.5% (4)	<b>Total Unsuccessful Applications</b>	1.9% (2)	8.3% (2)	0
<b>Total Incomplete Applications</b>	1	0	<b>Total Incomplete Applications</b>	6	0	1

2016 Campaign			2018 Campaign			
	Female	BME		Female	BME	Job Share
<b>Total Completed Assessment RA</b>	100% (158)	89.5% (34)	<b>Total Completed Assessment BSQ</b>	93.1% (94)	95.5% (21)	80% (12)
<b>Total Successful at Assessment RA</b>	73.4% (116)	55.9% (19)	<b>Total Successful at Assessment BSQ</b>	72.3% (68)	71.4% (15)	75% (9)
<b>Total Unsuccessful at Assessment RA</b>	26.6% (42)	44.1% (15)	<b>Total Unsuccessful at Assessment BSQ</b>	27.7% (26)	28.6% (6)	25% (3)
<b>Total Incomplete Assessment RA</b>	1	4	<b>Total Incomplete Assessment BSQ</b>	7	1	3

2016 Campaign			2018 Campaign			
	Female	BME		Female	BME	Job Share
<b>Total Completed Assessment SJT</b>	100% (158)	89.5% (34)	<b>Total Completed Assessment SJT</b>	97.1% (66)	66.7% (14)	100% (9)
<b>Total Successful at Assessment SJT</b>	44.9% (71)	50% (17)	<b>Total Successful at Assessment SJT</b>	83.3% (55)	42.9% (9)	77.8% (7)
<b>Total Unsuccessful at Assessment SJT</b>	55.1% (87)	50% (17)	<b>Total Unsuccessful at Assessment SJT</b>	16.7% (11)	35.7% (5)	22.2% (2)
<b>Total Incomplete Assessment SJT</b>	1	4	<b>Total Incomplete Assessment SJT</b>	2	1	0
<b>Total Completed Ability Tests</b>	86.1% (136)	84.2% (32)	<b>Total Completed Ability Tests</b>	80.3% (53)	100% (9)	100% (7)
<b>Total Successful at Ability Tests</b>	38.2% (52)	50% (16)	<b>Total Successful at Ability Tests</b>	92.5% (49)	88.9% (8)	100% (7)
<b>Total Unsuccessful at Ability Tests</b>	61.8% (84)	50% (16)	<b>Total Unsuccessful at Ability Tests</b>	7.5% (4)	11.1% (1)	0

2016 Campaign			2018 Campaign			
	Female	BME		Female	BME	Job Share
<b>Total Incomplete Ability Tests</b>	22	6	<b>Total Incomplete Ability Tests</b>	2	0	0
<p>In the 2016 campaign, all online assessments were open at the same time for candidates to complete. Candidates could also complete them in any order they wanted and were marked Pass/Fail once all assessments had been completed meaning a greater number of candidates could complete each stage of the assessments, as opposed to the 2018 campaign</p>			<p>In the 2018 campaign, the assessments were staggered and candidates were removed from the process at each stage. Assessments were opened one at a time and candidates had to complete them in that order. This reduced the amount of candidates who could complete the assessments at each stage. Comparing these 2016 and 2018 percentages for this stage would not give an accurate reflection.</p>			

2016 Campaign			2018 Campaign			
	Female	BME		Female	BME	Job Share
<b>Total Invited to Job Related Tests (JRTs)</b>	15	6	<b>Total Invited to JRTs</b>	24	3	6
<b>Total Attended for JRT and Verification Test</b>	53.3% (8)	100% (6)	<b>Total Attended for JRT</b>	58.3% (14)	100% (3)	50% (3)
<b>Total Failed Verification Tests</b>	37.5% (3)	16.7% (1)	<b>Total Completed JRTs</b>	85.7% (12)	100% (3)	100% (3)
<b>Total Passed Verification Tests and Completed JRTs</b>	62.5% (5)	83.3% (5)	In the 2018 campaign, verification tests were done at interview stage			
<b>Total Successful at JRTs</b>	60% (3)	40% (2)	<b>Total Successful at JRTs</b>	8.3% (1)	100% (3)	33.3% (1)
<b>Total Unsuccessful at JRTs</b>	40% (2)	60% (3)	<b>Total Unsuccessful at JRTs</b>	91.7% (11)	0	66.7% (2)
<b>Total Did Not Attend/Did Not Respond</b>	46.7% (7)	0	<b>Total Did Not Attend/Did Not Respond</b>	47.7% (10)	0	50% (3)

We took a top slice of our applicants to take through to JRT. 15 female and 13 BME candidates were in that top slice

We took a top slice of our applicants to take through to JRT. 24 were female and 3 BME candidates were in that top slice

2 of the female candidates chose to withdraw from the process part-way through the JRTs and therefore did not complete all of the tests. The 1 female candidate who was successful at the JRTs unfortunately did not get a high enough score on the written assessments

Although all 3 of the BME candidates were successful, only 2 had high enough scores to progress to interview.