



AGENDA ITEM: 8

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

13th May 2013

FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT (RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM)

Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is for information and details the recent recruitment and selection activity.

Background

- 2 The UK Fire and Rescue Service introduced National Firefighter Selection (NFS) processes in July 2006. The aim was to create nationally consistent, fair and objective assessments which reflected the core values of the fire and rescue service (FRS) and the considerable demands of the modern firefighter role. Extensive research has shown this approach to be the most objective and accurate method of assessing an individual's potential to perform safely and effectively. The NFS tests are utilised across all UK local authority FRS'.
- 3 There is no differentiation between the operational activities of firefighters based upon contractual arrangements. All firefighters, those contracted to the RDS, shift and day crewed conditions fulfil the same role and face the same technical and professional demands. Consequently, the NFS tests are used to select all UK firefighters.
- 4 Historically, the recruitment of firefighters to the RDS in rural and remote rural locations has been challenging. Communities live and work differently than they did in 1947 when the duty system was created. The role of the modern firefighter places considerable

technical and work life balance demands upon individuals and their families. In recent years these issues have contributed to a scarcity of suitable candidates.

- 5 In 2010 the Fire and Rescue Authority directed the Service to contribute to the sustainability of the system. Subsequently throughout 2010 and 2011 officers reviewed the application of the NFS tests with a view to positively impacting on success rates.

Information

- 6 Careful consideration was given to operational requirements when identifying the communities in which the campaign would be focused. Given the nature of the RDS, with potential firefighters needing to be able to respond to the fire station within 5-6 minutes during their available hours, there was no guarantee that sufficient suitable applications would be received from members of those communities, which were:

Cerrigydrudion
Llanrwst
Corwen
Denbigh
Ruthin
St Asaph
Flint
Mold
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Porthmadog
Amlwch

Attracting Applicants

- 7 Town Councils and community groups were encouraged to influence their existing networks to support the campaign in their local community. Station based crew members co-ordinated leaflet drops and displayed posters in their local area.

- 8 Press releases and a specially recorded radio advert received excellent coverage in media local to the recruitment areas. Double page feature articles including interviews with staff were printed in the Cambrian News and the Denbighshire Free Press. The press releases were also promoted on website and social media sites.

Online

- 9 In addition to the paid advertising campaign, Facebook and Twitter were used to promote open evenings and the campaign as a whole, prompting a great deal of interaction.
- 10 Paid advertising campaign:

Facebook

The Facebook advertising campaign generated a total of:

- 7,611,333 impressions (an impression is registered each time the ad shows on a user's screen);
- 5,671 clicks (A click is registered every time a user clicks on the ad); and
- 2,215 actions (an action is registered anytime a user interacts with the ad/sponsored story or promoted post i.e. if someone 'likes' or 'shares').

The total spend on the Facebook campaign including all adverts, sponsored stories and promoted posts was £1,240

Google adwords (advertising on Google using specific words)

The Google adwords campaign generated a total of;

- 59,903 impressions; and
- 200 clicks

costing a total of £180.94.

Bing ads (Bing is an alternative web search engine to Google operated by Microsoft)

The Bing ads campaign generated:

17,665 impressions; with

119 clicks

costing £100 in total.

Radio Adverts

- 11 A bilingual radio advert was produced featuring a crew manager from Cerrigydrudion and a Ruthin firefighter.

Open Evenings

- 12 The open evenings generated a good level of interest across North Wales, with 164 people attending the 11 events which ran from mid-January to mid-February.
- 13 Open evening attendees were given a presentation which gave an overview of the Service and the selection process, informed them of the benefits of being a retained firefighter and made them aware of the commitment and standards required by the Service.
- 14 A DVD of the physical tests was played and opportunities to undertake some of the physical tests were given. The Service physical activity co-ordinator was also available to discuss fitness issues.
- 15 Information packs for employers were provided where necessary and application packs and Welsh language CDs were distributed.

Applications

- 16 Nearly 200 application packs were distributed with 107 completed applications submitted for consideration. The recruitment campaign closed on the 15th February 2013.

Selection

- 17 76 applicants were invited to undertake the written tests (8 withdrew their applications at this stage). 68 attended and 46 were successful or required a re-test on one of the tests (68%), the remaining 22 were unsuccessful. All attendees received a full written feedback report on their performance.
- 18 The 46 successful applicants were invited to undertake the physical tests. Two applicants withdrew from the process at this stage.

- 19 Medicals and disclosures were requested for 32 candidates following which offers of employment were made and accepted by 25 individuals from all but one of the targeted communities. The majority of the new firefighters began their Phase One Development Programme on 21st April 2013. It is anticipated that the remaining 11 will begin their training on 12th May 2013.

Recommendation

- 20 That Members note the content of the report and the high rate of success.