

Report of the Head of Corporate Services

Thomas Review – summary and key findings

Purpose of report

1. To provide a summary of findings and recommendations of the recently published 'Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England, February 2015' (the Thomas Review).
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the findings set out in the Thomas Review and your officers' comments on key recommendations be noted.

Introduction and Background

2. In August 2014 the Government commissioned an independent reviewer, Adrian Thomas an HR professional, to consider whether conditions of service are a barrier to change that would otherwise deliver a more effective and efficient service to the public. In compiling the review over the next six months, he met with 21 fire authorities, including a visit to Hereford & Worcester, and other key players including the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Representative Bodies.
3. The review was submitted to Government in February 2015 and it was finally published 20 months later in November 2016, during which time a number of changes have taken place including fire and rescue services in England moving to the Home Office, the introduction of the Fire Reform programme, three changes of Fire Minister and the publication of the new Policing and Crime Act 2017.

Summary

4. The terms of reference for the review was:
"to review the conditions of service of chief fire officers and firefighters, and the processes by which they are determined to consider whether they present barriers to the reform, improvement and efficiency of fire and rescue services."
5. In carrying out the review two main areas were considered:
 - a. barriers to the flexibility and responsiveness of staffing and crewing arrangements; collaboration and integration with other emergency services; the increased use of on call firefighters; and the clarity of process in the fair recruitment and remuneration of senior fire officers and fire officers, and

- b. the national arrangements for agreeing conditions of service.
6. Thomas considered why there was a need for change, and pointed to the Knight Review and options available to reduce expenditure without reducing the quality of outcomes for the public, including in areas such as crewing levels and the ratio of senior officers to firefighters. The Knight Review argued that there were barriers hindering positive change, many of which were rooted in 'conditions of service' with particular barriers being the Grey Book (the scheme of conditions of service for uniformed employees of fire and rescue services) and prevailing industrial relations.
 7. In his meetings across the country, Thomas often found that while there is a sustained reduction in fires attended and an increase in fire safety and prevention activity, non-fire rescue and other resilience based activities, there hadn't been a corresponding change in the approach to conditions of service, recruitment, training and industrial relations. He was concerned that where change was happening, it was either slow or being resisted, despite the fire and rescue service having such a "valuable position of trust to lead and influence the public in the way they provide, and intend to provide the service in the future."
 8. The review recognised that conditions of service underpin the employment of the workforce and that any changes to the conditions will affect people directly, and therefore added a note of caution, "... there is sensitivity, and much legality, around how conditions of service are deployed and any desire to change them."
 9. Each section of the review has a range of observations and a number of recommendations, based on the findings from fieldwork and research. In drawing up the recommendations, Thomas recognised that different fire and rescue services may have already implemented some of them as a matter of course independently of the review.

Review Findings

10. Throughout the review, Thomas argues that much of the change needed appears to be common sense to the independent observer and that it should become common practice across the service. However, he also recognised that some proposals are controversial and will be seen as challenges or threats to be resisted. For example, he argues that the Grey Book is an obstacle to change and should be slimmed down and modernised, with duty systems, role maps and national occupational standards replaced by contracts of employment. He also proposes a complete reform of the role of the National Joint Council (NJC) and that Government should remove the 'right to strike' where it impedes the service from making an emergency response. On this latter point, the Government has already responded that it has "no intention of removing the right to strike at this time."

11. The findings were set out in five main themes with a total of 45 recommendations mostly addressed to fire and rescue authorities and representative bodies as well as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Joint Council.
12. The five themes cover the conditions of service and the areas of employment and operational relationships that they impact, and are listed below along with a number of highlighted areas of interest: -

a The working environment

11 recommendations mostly aimed at FRSs locally and nationally, including the key issues of

- implementing change programmes,
- communication,
- reflecting community diversity, and
- the particular issue of declaring second jobs.

b Documented conditions of service

6 recommendations aimed at national level FRS leadership (LGA, NJC, Government) including:

- promoting the wide range of work activities and skills of firefighters highlighting the prevention role, and
- revisions to conditions of service including slimming down the Grey Book requirements in favour of local contracts of employment.

c Industrial relations

6 recommendations primarily aimed at the NJC and Government suggesting:

- revisions to the NJC roles, structures and membership, and
- removal of the 'right to strike' (not accepted by Government at this time).

d Duty systems

6 recommendations aimed at FRSs locally and at the national level covering:

- aligning staff resources to identified risk,
- awareness raising and promoting the role and wider use of RDS firefighters,
- national legislation to provide protection for RDS firefighters, and
- a proposal to test 'bounty payments' for employers of RDS staff (unlikely to be pursued by Government at this time).

e **Management of the fire and rescue service**

15 recommendations mostly aimed at FRSs locally and at the national level covering:

- the role of the Fire and Rescue Authority,
- raising recruitment and selection academic standards,
- promoting FRS collaboration in recruitment (e.g. 'fast-track' management programmes, succession plans and senior leader programmes) potentially leading towards formal mergers of FRSs,
- the need for strategic workforce planning, removing the requirement for all firefighters to attain the same level of competency and instead tailoring training and pay towards core skills, competencies based on changing roles and activities in line with the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and introducing a 'safe to ride' measure,
- developing a national approach to leadership development including wider use of the Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) and recruitment,
- removal of the Gold Book in favour of local pay and conditions for senior managers reflecting local circumstances, and
- wider public access to pay policy statements

13. A final recommendation, reiterated throughout the review, was that all involved in the fire industry should adopt the principle of: -
"Where change is **common sense** it should become **common practice**."
14. A number of findings were also highlighted as initial priorities for action:
 - a. the need for rebuilding to be done around **culture and trust**, including addressing concerns around bullying and harassment,
 - b. the potential of the **retained duty system** in offering a significant opportunity to align resources to risk at a significantly lower cost than maintaining full time cover at times of low level risk and activity,
 - c. the very little value in capturing conditions of service in the **Gold and Grey Books**, recommending that the Gold Book be discontinued and the Grey Book be slimmed down and replaced by a contract of employment at the local level, supported by an employee handbook, and
 - d. the description of **role maps and duty systems** in the Grey Book creates inflexibility in the deployment of fire fighters in support of the local IRMP, recommending that they be removed from the Grey Book.
15. These initial priorities are set out in full in Appendix 2 of this report. The full list of 45 recommendations is set out in Appendix 3.

Consideration of the Review Recommendations

16. Of the recommendations to fire and rescue services, there are several relating to improving communication with the public and between management and workforce as a prerequisite to ensuring a healthy working culture and trust. He also includes recommendations on training and recruitment, duty systems, workforce planning, workforce diversity, management, governance and collaboration.
17. In most cases the Service is already doing or planning to do the actions recommended. Amongst the main activities underway is the establishment of the Organisational Development Working Group led by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, which is looking at key areas such as equality objectives and organisational culture.
18. Twenty-two recommendations are of direct interest to HWFRS, and your officers have commented on the Service's current position in relation to each. The comments incorporate a simple Red-Amber-Green coding to show whether or not the Service is delivering the action recommended. Of the 22 recommendations, two are shown as red. These refer to the need for an annual statement on the use of retained firefighters, which is not currently provided by the Service, though it can be incorporated into the annual Statement of Assurance.
19. The detailed comments are set out in full in Appendix 1.

Reception

20. Not surprisingly, given its opposition to the review in the first place, the Fire Brigades Union has roundly condemned the review as "incompetent, irrelevant and misleading" and the recommendations as "a compendium of ill-informed notions", as well as questioning the true 'independence' of the author.
21. CFOA has welcomed the publication and sees it as an opportunity to incorporate the review's recommendations into the overall fire reform programme which CFOA is supporting.
22. While Government will not be making a formal response to the review until it has engaged further with stakeholders and gained feedback on the recommendations and issues raised, the Fire Minister has said that the Government expects all fire and rescue authorities to focus on considering and delivering on the recommendations.

Conclusion

23. The Thomas Review is a wide-ranging look at conditions of service with some far-reaching implications for fire and rescue services and for key organisations including CFA, the NJC and LGA as well as Government. The Service is either delivering, or is able to deliver without too much additional work, most of the recommendations addressed to fire and rescue services.
24. In summarising the findings, Thomas concluded that
“The challenge for the Fire and Rescue Service is to continue to build upon the passion of the people within the industry, to accept and accelerate change, reach out to new technology and working practices to get in front of the change curve.”

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The review has no direct resources implications. However, some of the recommendations, if implemented may have cost, legal and human resources implications. There may also be considerable HR implications should recommendations about changes to conditions of service be implemented.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Many of the areas considered in the review link in with the Service's transformation agenda and the overall risk management approach set out in the Community Risk Management Plan.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Any risk implications arising from implementing changes recommended in the review would be considered through normal risk management procedures.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Comments on Recommendations of direct interest to HWFRS

Appendix 2 – Initial Priorities identified in the Thomas Review

Appendix 3 – Key Findings and Recommendations

Background papers

Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England,
February 2015 by Adrian Thomas

Facing The Future: Findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and
rescue authorities in England, May 2013 by Sir Ken Knight

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Comments on recommendations of direct interest to HWFRS

The working environment	
1. Culture and trust are at the centre of many of the changes required to create a high performing service aligned to the needs of the people it serves. A consistent employee engagement survey should be developed and deployed across the service (allowing inter authority comparisons) and 'hard wired' into management objectives.	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The Fire Authority has established an Organisational Development Working Group, which reports to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.</p> <p>The Group is currently refreshing the equality objectives, and one of the areas of focus will be culture. As part of this an external consultant has been engaged to carry out a benchmarking exercise against the Equality Framework. The results of this will then be used to inform an action plan supporting delivery of the objectives. It is anticipated that an appropriate employee survey will be developed as part of this.</p>	<p>Amber</p> <p>The Organisational Development Working Group is still at an early stage, but is planning to address these areas.</p>
2. Early engagement with employee representatives at the earliest opportunity should be a feature of all change programmes.	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The Joint Consultative Committee provides a forum whereby all change programmes for consultation are reported and discussed and their progress monitored. This is supported by an agreed, and regularly used, industrial relations protocol promoting early engagement with Representative Bodies.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>There are appropriate engagement mechanisms in place.</p>
3. Fire and rescue services should deploy training in effective change management, leadership and employee engagement in addition to Industrial Relations.	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Development programmes include an accredited leadership and management qualification (commensurate to managerial level) which covers areas relating to change management and leadership and management.</p> <p>Leadership training is provided by recognised providers (Level 5,7) Masters, ELP, etc. Change management and industrial relations training does not take place currently.</p>	<p>Amber</p> <p>There are currently gaps in change management training and no specific training in industrial relations.</p>

4. Increased importance should be placed by fire and rescue services on employee communication - appropriate management training and processes (direct to employee) should be implemented

Comments:

The Service currently uses a wide array of methods to communicate with its employees including the Service Bulletin, management cascades, briefings, media and the Service website.

An internal review of communication was carried out in early 2016. It looked at the success of these methods and the key messages that were of importance to staff. Following the review several improvements were made to help improve employee communication, and further improvements are planned. Several managers will also be attending management courses arranged by HR, which will further assist with improving direct employee communication.

Green

Current employee communications are strong and there are plans to further improve employee communication.

5. Fire and rescue services should instigate audits of the flow of management information reaching the workforce with the aim of improving the flow of information to the frontline firefighter

Comments:

With regard to senior management, the Service carries out annual SMB visits to deliver key messages as well as gathering feedback and engaging with staff. In addition, the Chief Fire Officer publishes a regular message in the widely-read Service Bulletin, with key messages conveyed on a fortnightly basis.

The flow of management information was recently measured in the review of internal communications using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Further audits may also take place in the future to ensure that the information is reaching the workforce efficiently and effectively.

Green

Current employee communications are strong and there are plans for further audits of information flow.

6. Management performance objectives should be hard wired to the results of an annual employee engagement and communication survey.

Comments:

As noted at 1 above, the recently established Organisational Development Working Group is currently refreshing the equality objectives. Part of this is likely to be the development of an employee survey, which can be used to identify areas of focus for management performance objectives.

Amber

The Organisational Development Working Group is still at an early stage, but is planning to address these areas.

7. Unconscious bias training should be rolled out across the fire and rescue service.

Comments:

In support of developments noted at 1 and 6 above, it is anticipated that the approach to equality and diversity training will be updated to incorporate unconscious bias training within it.

Amber

The Organisational Development Working Group is still at an early stage, but is planning to address these areas.

8. The leadership of the Fire and Rescue Service (represented by the Local Government Association and Chief Fire Officers Association) and the employee representatives together with special interest groups representing woman and black and minority ethnic firefighters should publish a memorandum of understanding as to how people will be treated.

Comments:

The Ethical Framework SPI sets out corporate values, purposes and the roles and responsibilities of all staff and volunteers.

Moreover, the Fire Authority are corporate members of the Asian Fire Service Association and Women in the Fire Service UK, and actively engage with these groups.

Women and black and ethnic minority firefighters still represent a very low proportion of the workforce relative to their demographic distribution across the two counties.

See also comments at 1 above.

Amber

While addressed to the LGA and CFOA, the Service also needs to reflect community diversity within its workforce.

9. Research should be directed at how the cadet scheme could be utilised to widen the diversity of the service and how the interest in supporting the fire service can be maintained when the cadets leave the scheme (impacting both equality and potentially the retained duty system).

Comments:

As noted at 1 above, the recently established Organisational Development Working Group is currently refreshing the equality objectives. It is anticipated that the cadet scheme will be incorporated into this.

Amber

The Organisational Development Working Group is still at an early stage, but is planning to address these areas.

10. Each fire and rescue service should maintain an active register of firefighters with second jobs. A refusal or failure to declare a second job should be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Comments:

All employees who undertake part-time paid employment, carry on a trade or business or hold another office for hire or gain are required to complete a Pers 22 Form (Request to undertake paid part-time employment), which has to be authorised by the Group Commander/Line Manager.

These details are then recorded on HR Connect.

A clause in contracts for uniformed staff states: "You are required to notify and keep the Service updated of any work performed for any other employer in order that working time records can be maintained." However, this clause is not in the current non-uniform contract.

Current records are reliant on individuals completing the forms, so their accuracy could be queried.

Amber

There is a need to stress that recording second jobs is compulsory and subject to serious disciplinary action if not declared. This is not currently enforced and is an area that needs to be addressed through review and action plan

Documented conditions of service

No specific recommendations for HWFRS

Industrial relations

No specific recommendations for HWFRS

Retained duty system

24. Fire and Rescue Authorities should adopt duty systems and staffing which align fire fighter availability to the planned work load (e.g. community safety) whilst providing response cover appropriate to the Integrated Risk Management plan should be encouraged.

Comments:

HWFRS has 19 Retained Duty System (RDS) units, 3 Day Crewing and 3 Day Crewing Plus in operation. These duty systems are appropriate to the risk profiles across the two counties.

Green

Duty systems are appropriate to risk profiles, and are kept under review.

25. Fire and rescue authorities should be required to provide an annual statement on the use of retained firefighters. Any decision not to use or to cease to use retained firefighters should be communicated in this statement and underpinned with operational evidence provided by the fire and rescue service.

<p>Comments:</p> <p>Not currently done in this format, though the availability of RDS crews and incidents attended is published in quarterly performance reports to the Fire Authority. HWFRS uses RDS crewing widely across the two counties.</p>	<p>Red</p> <p>Not done in this format at present, but this information could be provided.</p>
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26. As part of the annual statement fire and rescue services should be required to provide an annual commentary on the number and use of retained firefighters. And in particular to report on the level of mixed crewing or co-working with wholetime personnel.

<p>Comments:</p> <p>Policies are in place for mixed crewing (RDS Management and Day Crewing SPI). There is also a Resilience Register.</p> <p>At most incidents and at many training exercises, there is an element of co-working.</p>	<p>Red</p> <p>Not done at present, but this information could be provided.</p>
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29. Trial and evaluate, in a limited number of fire and rescue services, the use of an annual bounty payment for employers of retained firefighters.

<p>Comments:</p> <p>HWFRS would welcome any opportunity to work closely with employers to improve the recruitment and retention of RDS personnel, but understands that the Government are unlikely to pursue this particular option. It is appropriate for any other options to be considered at a national level through the Chief Fire Officers Association, as there are likely to be cost implications.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>The Service continues to explore opportunities to work more closely with employers to help improve the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters.</p>
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Management of the Fire and Rescue Service

30. Fire authorities should keep the number and level of commitment of fire authority elected members under review. The right number may differ by authority but should be large enough to allow scrutiny without becoming burdensome on operational delivery.

<p>Comments:</p> <p>The Fire Authority is constituted of 25 members, which is the current maximum membership as set out in the Combination Order.</p> <p>All new Members attend an induction and are made aware of their scrutiny role. The role description for Authority Members includes a key competency to provide constructive challenge and a responsibility to contribute actively to the scrutiny of the Authority's strategic policies, priorities, budget, performance and service delivery on</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Procedures are already in place.</p>
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behalf of the community.

The Member Development Strategy and training programme aim to equip Members with the support, knowledge and information necessary to achieve and maintain this key competency. The attendance of Members at meetings, training and other events is recorded and feedback from Members is reviewed.

The Authority's committee structure is set up to facilitate Members in undertaking scrutiny and to hold officers to account. For example, the Policy & Resources Committee comprises 13 Members and scrutinises the quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports.

The Audit & Standards Committee (12 Members) scrutinises the adequacy of management responses to external and internal auditor's reports. Member Task and Finish Groups have also been utilised to look at specific issues in detail and report back to the principal committee.

Officers provide the opportunities for Members to be engaged in the work of the Authority and it is the responsibility of political group leaders to ensure that their Members have an appropriate level of commitment to the Authority.

31. Recruitment and selection academic standards should be immediately raised.

Comments:

In terms of the wholetime workforce, there is no academic requirement to enter into selection processes for those who aspire to management levels. However, development programmes include a variety of academic qualifications (commensurate to the managerial level) ranging from Levels 3, 5 and 7 to MAs and MBAs.

Entry requirements for the role of on-call firefighter include a level of Literacy and Numeracy at Key Skills Level 2 in Maths and English Language (e.g. GCSC at Grade A* - C), which is considered appropriate as it is not their primary occupation.

Amber

Need to consider raising academic standards requirements for wholetime recruitment to ensure there is a sufficient pool of potential middle and senior managers.

35. Fire and rescue services should maintain an up-to-date strategic workforce plan.

Comments:

HWFRS currently operate workforce planning for wholetime employees. However, this is not linked to the learning and development programme. While retirement profiles and numbers are known, there is currently no profiling of staff career paths.

Amber

A new Workforce Development Plan is being prepared, which will address these areas.

Work is in progress for non-uniformed and retained employees.

36. Fire and rescue services that cannot offer promotional opportunities away from the original place of work/watch then preparatory management training should be available as part of a strategic workforce development plan.

Comments:

As at 35 above.

Amber

A new Workforce Development Plan is being prepared, which will address these areas.

37. The expectation that all fire fighters attain the same, maximum, level of competency should be removed. The wide and increasing range of roles and activities undertaken by fire fighters calls for a more sophisticated alignment of capability with the activity required in support of the local Integrated Risk Management Plan than can be provided by the view that 'a fire fighter is a fire fighter'.

Comments:

HWFRS currently has different competencies for different staff based on role and/or location. There needs to be a minimum level to ensure that a firefighter is safe and effective.

HWFRS would investigate the possibility of sending 'defensive firefighters' to certain incident types.

This is also an area being considered at a national level through CFOA and the creation of a new National Fire Chiefs' Council.

Amber

May need to review HWFRS competency and capability requirements for activities undertaken, taking into account the work of CFOA/NFCC.

38. Training and pay should reflect a 'safe to ride' measure – basic core skills and core pay followed by competency based increments as required (which in the event of losing that competency means that the fire fighter retains their job albeit without that competency).

Comments:

Trainee rate of pay is awarded whilst individuals are attending the Core Skills Recruits Course. Upon completion, individuals are awarded the Development rate of pay. Competent rate of pay is achieved upon completion of the Firefighter Development Programme.

Having an operational workforce with varying technical competencies may result in a fragmented and inflexible approach to service delivery.

Amber

There would be a need to review (and potentially replace) existing guidance and protocols in relation to HWFRS competency and capability requirements for activities undertaken.

40. Fire and rescue services not using the Executive Leadership Programme should reconsider doing so.

Comments:

HWFRS uses the Executive Leadership Programme.

Green

Already in place.

43. All fire and rescue services and fire authorities should review the accessibility of their pay policy statements.

Comments:

The Fire Authority's Pay Policy Statement is accessible on the Service website.

Green

Already in place.

Initial Priorities identified in the Thomas Review (pp 12-14)	
I.	<p>There is much re-building to be done around culture and trust, including addressing the concerns around bullying and harassment. This also has an obvious relationship with equality and diversity. Everyone deserves a work place free from bullying where employment and progression is on merit and free from bias. The fire service needs inspirational leaders able to deliver a high performing, engaged workforce. Where I found these leaders during my fieldwork visits I also found positive industrial relations. Understanding and surfacing the differing levels of industrial relations culture and trust is vital to moving forward in these areas. A service wide engagement survey focused on culture, equality and trust should be conducted on an annual basis. Management performance objectives should be 'hard wired' into this survey. Whilst embedding changes in management culture may take time, I believe the implementation of employee engagement surveys and amendments to management objectives could be taken forward by each fire and rescue authority and implemented relatively quickly.</p>
II.	<p>The retained duty system offers significant opportunity to align resources to risk at a significantly lower cost than maintaining full time cover at times of low level risk and activity. However the difficulties in recruiting retained duty system fire fighters were repeatedly communicated to me. In addition to supporting a national recruitment and communication programme Government should bring forward legislation that extends employment protection (as enjoyed by military reservists) to fire fighters engaged on retained duty systems and part-time contracts.</p>
III.	<p>Conditions of service are currently documented in the Green, Grey and Gold books. My review makes no recommendation as to the Green Book. However, I find very little value in capturing conditions of service in the Gold and Grey Books. I found the Gold Book to be redundant, unread and unused in virtually every authority I visited or which responded to my questionnaire. I recommend that the Gold Book is discontinued and that the employers and representative bodies implement this recommendation as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Grey Book is held by fire fighters as a key foundation or anchor for their conditions of service, even though in most fire and rescue services there are local derivations away from the national provisions contained within it. Employers repeatedly pointed out to me either that the Grey Book was a barrier to alignment of conditions of service with local delivery or that they had managed to change locally the conditions of service despite the Grey Book. Either way it appears to me that the Grey Book should be slimmed down. Consideration should be given by the employers, in consultation with representative bodies, as to replacing the Grey Book with a contract of employment at the local level, supported by an employee handbook. Base Pay (see section on training) should remain national but all other conditions of service should have a more regional/local flavour and I recommend that the national joint council takes action to explore how such a system could operate in practical terms.</p>

IV.	The description of role maps and duty systems in the Grey Book creates inflexibility in the deployment of fire fighters in support of the local Integrated Risk Management Plan. Roles maps are too restrictive and duty systems within the Grey Book in many fires and rescue services do not reflect the changing activity from response to prevention. Both the list of role maps and the pre-determined duty systems should be removed from the Grey Book by the employers, in consultation with representative bodies.
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Key Findings and Recommendations identified in the Thomas Review

The working environment
1. Culture and trust are at the centre of many of the changes required to create a high performing service aligned to the needs of the people it serves. A consistent employee engagement survey should be developed and deployed across the service (allowing inter authority comparisons) and 'hard wired' into management objectives.
2. Early engagement with employee representatives at the earliest opportunity should be a feature of all change programmes.
3. Fire and rescue services should deploy training in effective change management, leadership and employee engagement in addition to Industrial Relations.
4. Increased importance should be placed by fire and rescue services on employee communication - appropriate management training and processes (direct to employee) should be implemented
5. Fire and rescue services should instigate audits of the flow of management information reaching the workforce with the aim of improving the flow of information to the frontline firefighter
6. Management performance objectives should be hard wired to the results of an annual employee engagement and communication survey.
7. Unconscious bias training should be rolled out across the fire and rescue service.
8. The leadership of the Fire and Rescue Service (represented by the Local Government Association and Chief Fire Officers Association) and the employee representatives together with special interest groups representing woman and black and minority ethnic firefighters should publish a memorandum of understanding as to how people will be treated.
9. Research should be directed at how the cadet scheme could be utilised to widen the diversity of the service and how the interest in supporting the fire service can be maintained when the cadets leave the scheme (impacting both equality and potentially the retained duty system).
10. Each fire and rescue service should maintain an active register of firefighters with second jobs. A refusal or failure to declare a second job should be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.
11. Implement a single technological/equipment evaluation facility.
Documented conditions of service
12. The fire and rescue services in conjunction with the Government should create a national communication programme highlighting the range of activities and skills beyond fighting fires currently undertaken by firefighters. The aim of this would be to raise public awareness that creating a flexible fire and rescue service aligned to prevention is key to increasing safety in the local community.

13. Slim down and modernise the Grey Book, removing duty systems and reference to role maps and national occupational standards and replace with contracts of employment.
14. Minimum night time shift hours should be removed from the Grey Book
15. Disagreements regarding additional payments, collaborations or implementation of new technologies and working practices should be resolved locally without resort to the national advisory panels.
16. The national employers, government and employee representatives should, in support of establishing a changed culture (as detailed earlier), meet and agree a re-defined national joint protocol on industrial relations.
17. The ability to compulsorily move an individual from the flexible duty system should be introduced.

Industrial relations
18. The National Joint Council should be retained for the purposes of national pay bargaining for basic pay whilst reforming itself to represent employers and employees on a more local basis for all other conditions of service including incremental pay for acquiring competences beyond 'safe to ride'.
19. The National Joint Council should consider operating regionally to reflect the requirements of the different fire authorities whilst retaining a national umbrella with respect to basic pay
20. Remove Technical Advisory Panels and Resolution Advisory Panel and replace with a direct to ACAS approach. Fire and Rescue Authorities are undertaking a significant amount of local negotiation as they agree positions out with the Grey Book locally and this will not significantly increase workload or cost – in fact the Knight review suggested that local negotiations save money.
21. The Government should recognise the increasing view that the current right to withdraw labour (take strike action) is incompatible with the expectations that the public has of an emergency service. As such Government should bring forward appropriate legislation to remove the protection afforded under the Act to unions when their collective strike action, or action short of strike, impedes the fire and rescue service from making an emergency response. The right to strike being retained for non-emergency activities.
22. If the Government determines not to bring forward legislation to restrict the right to strike then Government should instigate consultation with a view to agreeing with employees impacted a no strike agreement in emergency situations. The right to strike being retained for non-emergency activities.
23. The chair of the National Joint Council should instigate an independent review of the structure and representative make-up of the National Joint Council to enable it to perform effectively at both a local and national level – noting that a number of contributors, from both the employers and the representatives, felt that they were excluded from the council.

Retained Duty systems

24. Fire and Rescue Authorities should adopt duty systems and staffing which align fire fighter availability to the planned work load (e.g. community safety) whilst providing response cover appropriate to the Integrated Risk Management plan should be encouraged.
25. Fire and rescue authorities should be required to provide an annual statement on the use of retained firefighters. Any decision not to use or to cease to use retained firefighters should be communicated in this statement and underpinned with operational evidence provided by the fire and rescue service.
26. As part of the annual statement fire and rescue services should be required to provide an annual commentary on the number and use of retained firefighters. And in particular to report on the level of mixed crewing or co-working with wholetime personnel.
27. Legislation should be brought forward to provide employment protection to fire fighters employed on the Retained Duty System. This legislation is already in place for other groups (military reservists, magistrates and so on).
28. A national awareness programme for retained duty system personnel should be produced.
29. Trial and evaluate, in a limited number of fire and rescue services, the use of an annual bounty payment for employers of retained firefighters.

Management of the Fire and Rescue Service

30. Fire authorities should keep the number and level of commitment of fire authority elected members under review. The right number may differ by authority but should be large enough to allow scrutiny without becoming burdensome on operational delivery.
31. Recruitment and selection academic standards should be immediately raised.
32. Fire and rescue services should create critical mass by collaborating in recruitment including lateral recruitment into 'fast track' management programmes.
33. Fire and rescue services should explore a collaborative approach to the creation of succession plans and senior leader programmes with more cross authority developmental moves
34. Where collaboration could lead to more formal mergers, Government should find transformational funding to support the creation of larger fire and rescue services that offer critical mass in areas of technology introduction, recruitment, succession and development.
35. Fire and rescue services should maintain an up-to-date strategic workforce plan.
36. Fire and rescue services that cannot offer promotional opportunities away from the original place of work/watch then preparatory management training should be available as part of a strategic workforce development plan.

37. The expectation that all fire fighters attain the same, maximum, level of competency should be removed. The wide and increasing range of roles and activities undertaken by fire fighters calls for a more sophisticated alignment of capability with the activity required in support of the local Integrated Risk Management Plan than can be provided by the view that 'a fire fighter is a fire fighter'.
38. Training and pay should reflect a 'safe to ride' measure – basic core skills and core pay followed by competency based increments as required (which in the event of losing that competency means that the fire fighter retains their job albeit without that competency).
39. To create and maintain (in the face of decreasing numbers) a cadre of managers capable of becoming future fire and rescue service leaders, a standardised industry wide approach to leadership development should be adopted.
40. Fire and rescue services not using the Executive Leadership Programme should reconsider doing so.
41. A lateral, industry wide, recruitment scheme should be created. This will fast track managers through the experiential requirements and into senior roles.
42. The Gold Book (conditions of service for principal officers) should be removed along with that for Brigade Managers. With pay and conditions of service agreed locally subject to the introduction of a more sophisticated job evaluation programme that better reflects job size, role complexity and other duties in a way which allows inter authority comparison.
43. All fire and rescue services and fire authorities should review the accessibility of their pay policy statements.
44. The Chief Fire Officers Association should consider increasing the term of office for the role of president from 1 year to 2 or 3 years – to provide increased stability of leadership.
45. Finally all participants in the fire industry should adopt the principle of: - <p style="text-align: center;">“Where change is common sense it should become common practice”</p>