

**Agenda Item No. 3**

**Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

**21 March 2016 at 12.30pm**  
**at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:** Councillor Tranter (Chair);  
Councillors Barrie, Hogarth, B Singh, and Skinner

**Apology:** Councillors Spence, Ward and Young

**Observer:** Councillor Shackleton

5/16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

6/15 **Consideration of the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee**

It was agreed that Councillor Tranter and Stephen Timmington, WMFS Strategic Hub would meet to discuss the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee.

7/16 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2016, be approved as a correct record.

Following the request at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 February, a briefing paper on the age profile of WMFS employees had been circulated as part of the agenda pack and was noted by members (Appendix 1 to these minutes).

8/16 **Dispute Resolution Report**

The Committee noted the Dispute Resolution report for the period 1 June 2015 to 31 December 2015.

Wendy Browning Sampson, People Support Manager, provided an overview of the report. There had been eight grievances lodged during the period, six from grey book employees and two from green book employees. The majority of reasons had been due to disagreements with managers. Two were due to concerns identified surrounding transfers.

It was noted that the number of grievances was very low considering the size of the organisation and the number of employees. Additionally, the fact that grievances are being lodged could be seen as positive, reflecting that members of staff felt able to take that route if applicable.

A member enquired about the legal position surrounding transfers. It was confirmed that all contracts for employees included the caveat that they could be posted to any location within the Service area. The Service would always strive to ensure people are posted at locations as close to where they wished to be / close to their homes.

**Resolved: -**

That the report is to be submitted to the Joint Consultative Panel.

9/16

**Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16**

The Committee noted the progress of the work programme for 2015/16.

There was nothing to report on the Data Sharing Review. It was agreed that the provisional meeting on 28 April 2016 would not be utilised.

(Meeting ended at 13:15 pm)

Contact Officer: Stephen Timmington Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6680
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## **Briefing Paper – Scrutiny Committee 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

### **Age profile of WMFS employees**

It is recognised that the age structure of the UK workforce is rapidly changing and it is estimated that by 2020 nearly a third of the UK workforce will be over 50.

The age profile for WMFS, detailed at Appendix 1, demonstrates our ageing workforce.

#### **Mitigating the Risks posed by an Ageing Workforce**

Our workforce planning activity ensures that we are able to understand our age profile which is crucial for us to be able to ensure measures are in place to mitigate any potential risks associated with an ageing workforce. Interestingly, our workforce data indicates that there is no link between age and sickness. However, there does appear to be a link between gender and sickness and when this is looked at more closely, gender is a predictor of higher levels of sickness in one age category only, 35 – 44 years. In this age band, women are more likely to be sick with reproductive issues, joint problems and hospital in patient treatment.

Our approach to mitigating risk associated with an ageing workforce is a holistic one and includes:

#### **1. Investment in training, Learning & Development and performance management**

All employees, regardless of age, need training and development to keep their skills up to date. Providing older employees with opportunities to retrain and develop is a vital part in ensuring that they continue to feel motivated, engaged and valued in their role.

#### **2. Capability of Line Managers**

Someone's decision to leave the Service can be the result of managers failing to appropriately support and understand the needs of their team. Our Business Partners support managers to not only understand the demographic profile of their team, but to ensure they are able to meet the needs of a diverse workforce. As a manager it is essential that they demonstrate positive leadership traits such as being flexible, approachable, trustworthy and encouraging of employee engagement which will support genuine wellbeing.

### **3. Support Employee Health and Wellbeing**

Whilst good and effective line management is clearly important in ensuring that any health problems are flagged early on, our strategy and approach to wellbeing is crucial.

We have recently developed our Wellbeing Strategy which seeks to ensure that our employees are resilient, motivated, committed and flexible and prepared for change. Our strategy identifies that managing health, work and wellbeing is the responsibility of both the employer and employee.

We recognise that there are different elements of Wellbeing, and that it will mean different things to different people. Our strategy identifies 8 elements of Wellbeing including:

- MIND – developing the mind and body
- BODY – fit and healthy lifestyle
- SPIRIT – Personal beliefs
- SOCIAL – friends, family and community
- OCCUPATIONAL – fitness for work and life balance
- RESILIENCE – coping strategies
- ENVIRONMENTAL – nature and surroundings
- FINANCIAL – financial planning

We are currently working in partnership with MIND, the leading mental health charity in the UK and we have recently signed the MIND Blue Light Pledge. The Blue Light programme is a national initiative aimed at emergency service employees who are known to be more susceptible to stress and other mental health conditions than the general population. The programme has assisted WMFS in expanding and enhancing the good work we have already achieved in de-stigmatising mental health and providing fast-track assistance and support.

Our approach to Firefighter Fitness has been developed in line with CFOA research and guidance, and we are implementing annual fitness assessments for all operational personnel. This enables early intervention for any fitness related issues, provides bespoke 'work up' programmes for individuals as well as actively monitoring fitness levels. This will support our operational firefighters in maintaining good health and fitness as they get older.

We are currently looking at awareness around the menopause and its potential impact on our female workforce. During March, a range of activities are being undertaken to mark International Women's Day. Activities will include awareness sessions around the menopause as well as providing information / signposting for support.

#### **4. Flexible working**

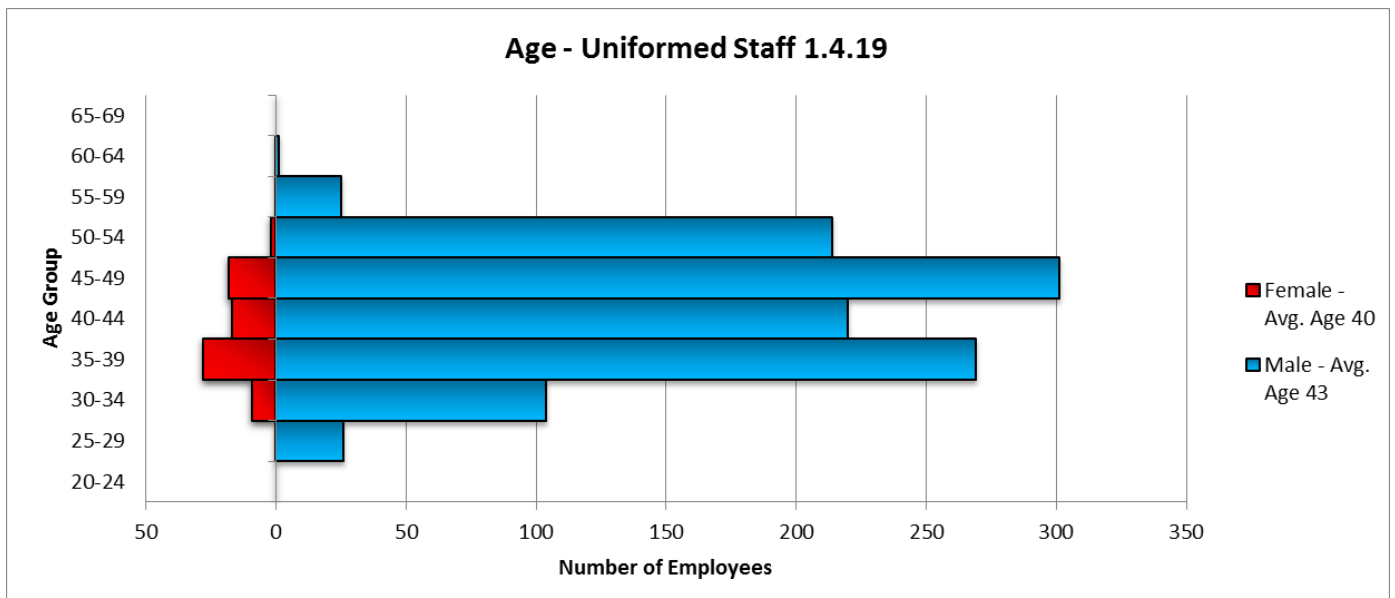
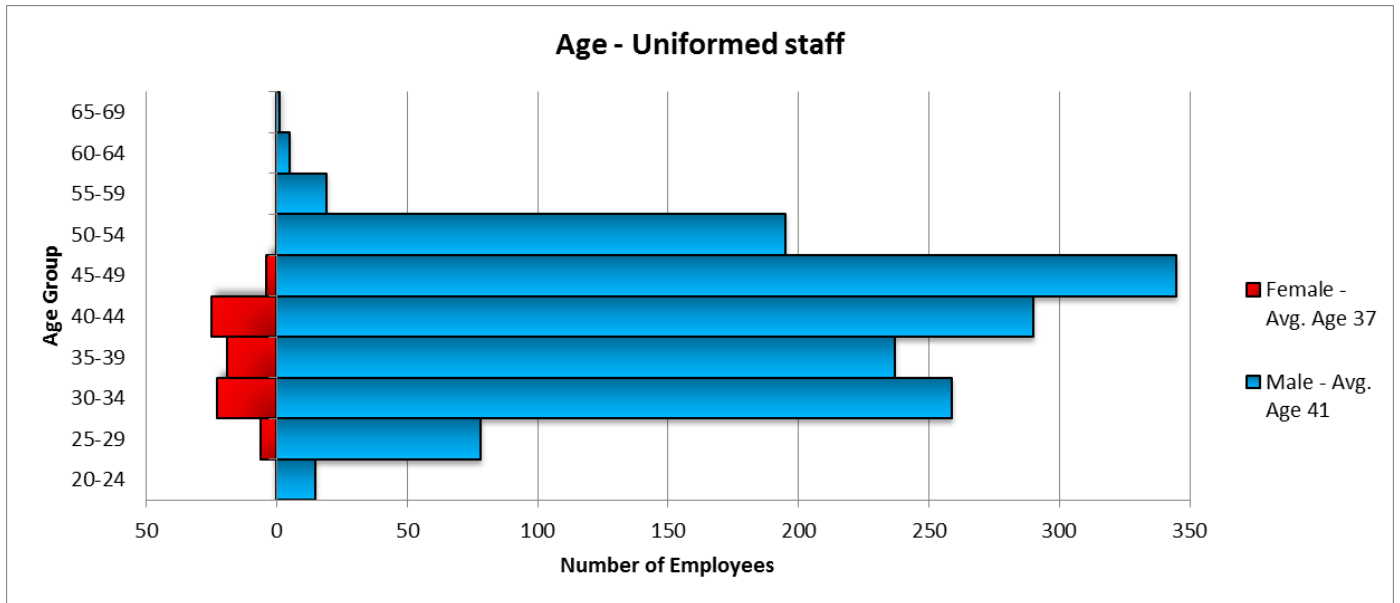
Providing flexible working arrangements for our employees forms a key component of our strategy to improve staff retention as our employees get older. We recognise that older employees may suffer ill health, have caring responsibilities and other commitments on their time. We understand the importance in helping our employees manage their work and home life.

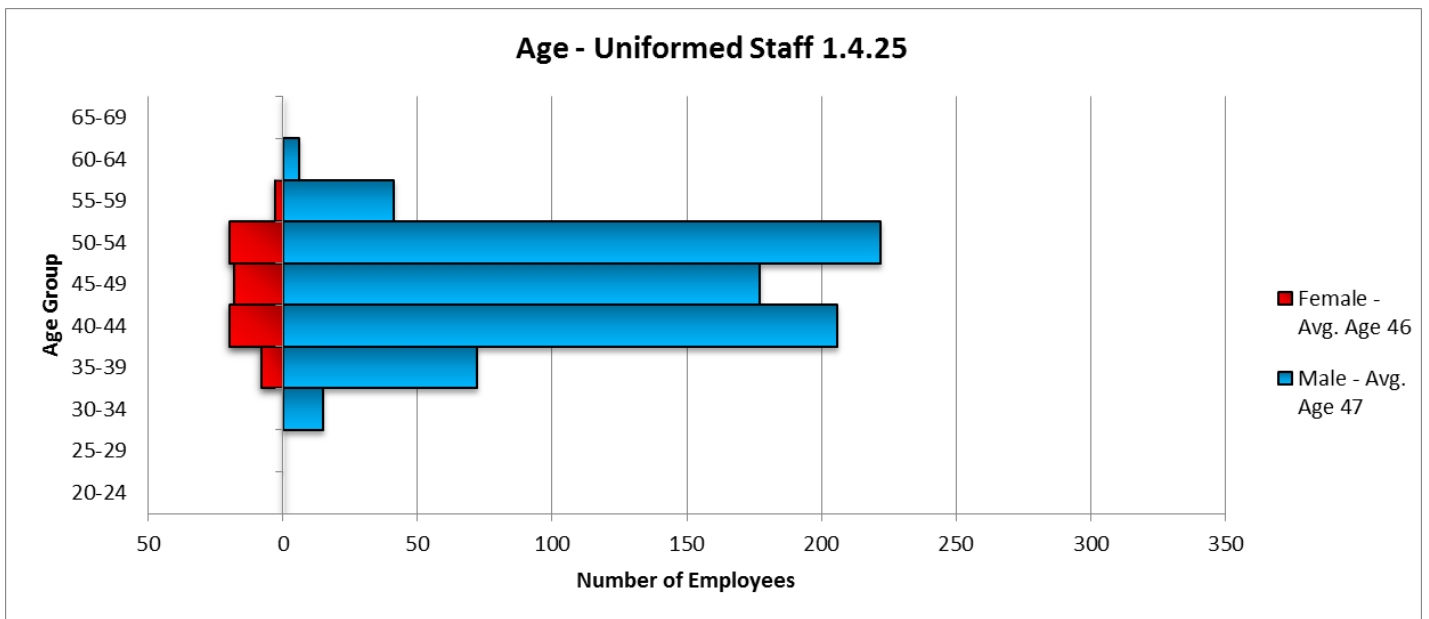
With an ageing workforce we will continue provide flexible working practices that match the employee demand and at the same time meet the requirements of the organisation.

We fully understand the importance and benefits of a healthy, safe, motivated and well workforce. We will continue to review our approach to ensure we are proactive in providing the right levels of support and guidance for all colleagues within West Midlands Fire Service.

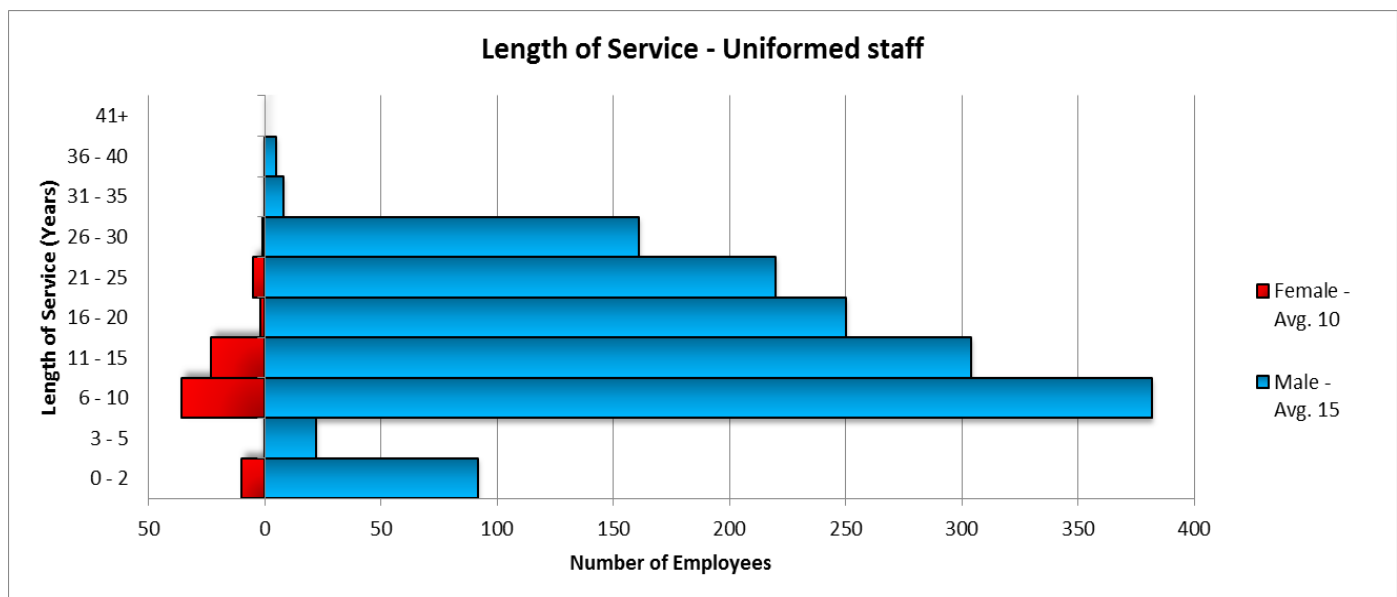
## Uniformed staff

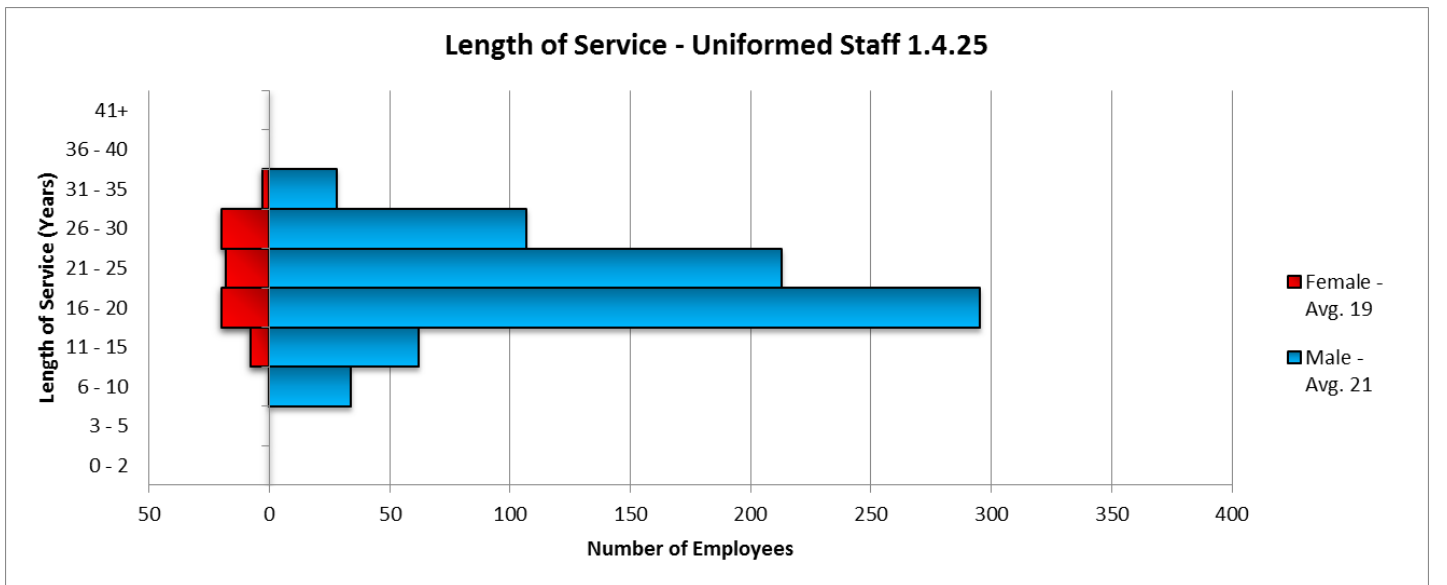
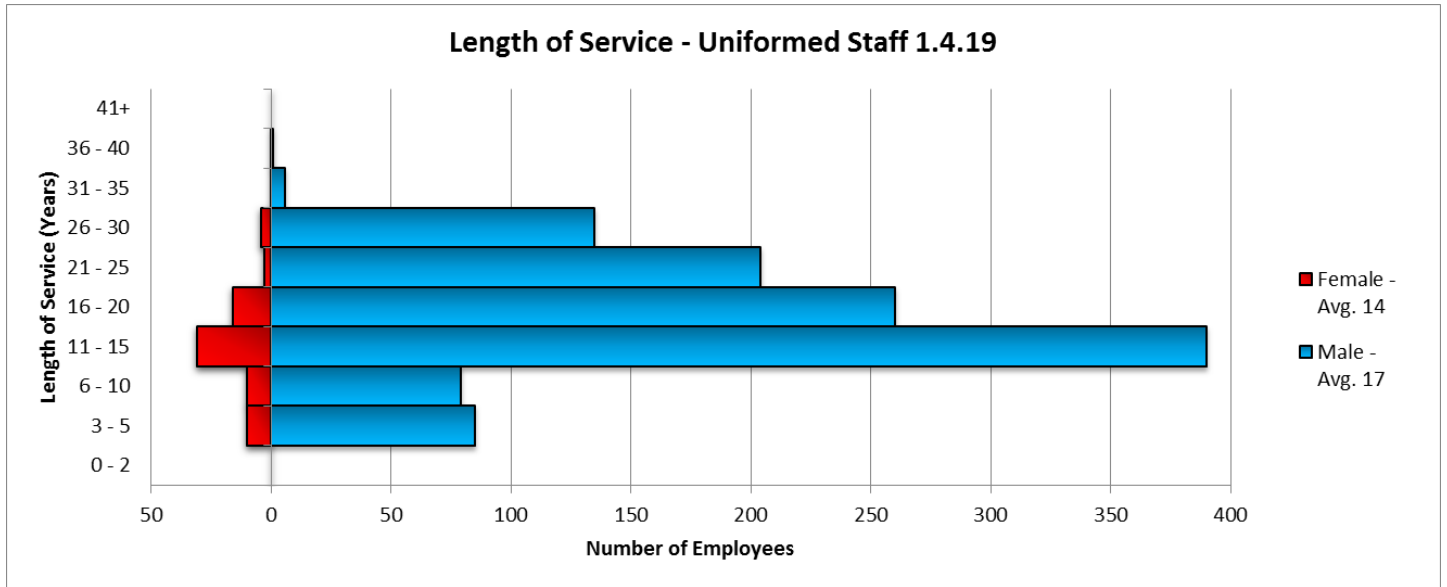
- The average age of Uniformed staff is 41, ranging from ages 21 to 66. 9% of the workforce are over 50.
- The workforce is an ageing one. In 2008 the average age was 38, with 6% over the age of 50.
- Average age will increase to 43 by April 2019 and 47 by April 2025 (assuming no recruitment).





These charts show the shrinking workforce and the increasing length of service. The average length of service is currently 15 years and ranges from 1 to 40 years. By April 2019 this will increase to 17 years (range 4 to 36), and by April 2025 to 20 years (range 10 to 35).

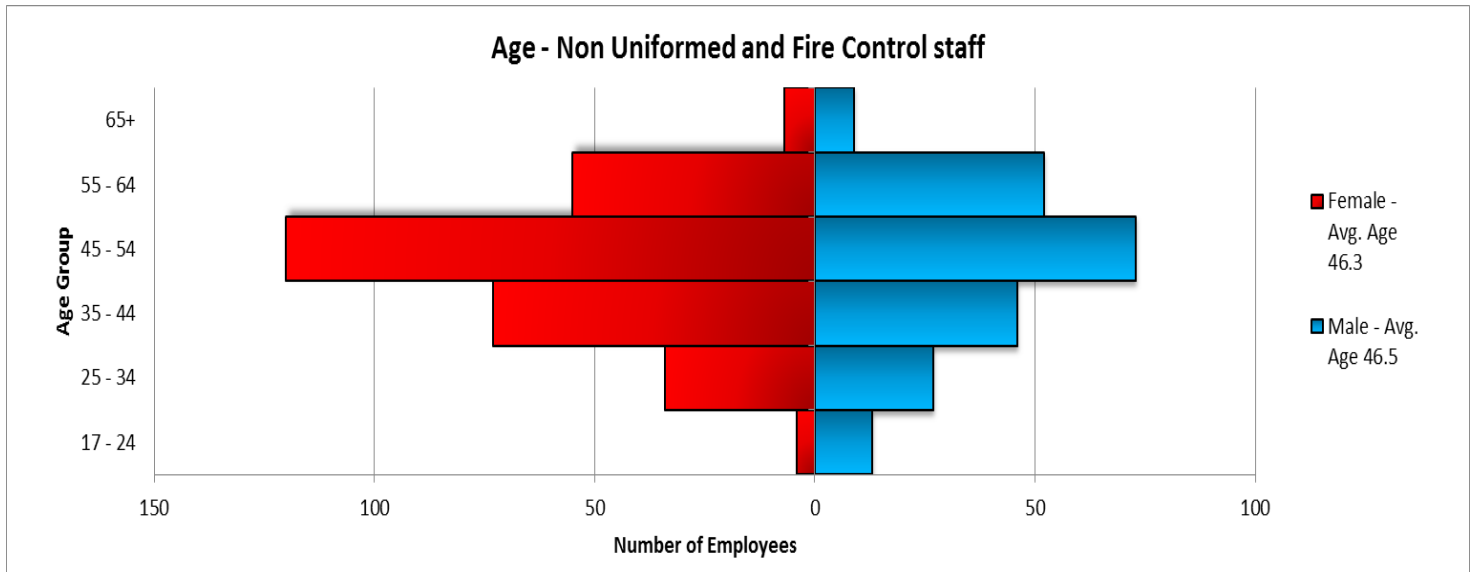






## Non Uniformed and Fire Control staff

- The average age of Non-Uniformed and Fire Control staff is 46, ranging from 18 to 72. 38% of the workforce are over 50.
- The workforce is an ageing one. In 2008 the average age was 43, with 28% over the age of 50.



- The average length of service of Non-Uniformed staff is 12 years and of Fire Control staff 15 years.

