

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19 SEPTEMBER 2011

1. **REVISED OPERATING ESTABLISHMENT OF RIDER STAFF**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority note the proposed changes to the operating establishment of rider staff.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Authority of changes to the operating establishment of rider staff.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The term 'Establishment' relates to a calculation used by West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) to calculate the number of rider staff required to ensure availability for each shift when taking into account several factors including absence rates, statutory leave, off shift training and other absences. The actual number of staff available for duty is described as the 'Strength'.

The term 'rider staff' is used to describe the group of staff who are required to provide operational cover from the fire stations through a set of staffing protocols across the West Midlands.

3.2 It is important to maintain the relationship between establishment and strength to ensure leave, absence due to sickness, training programmes and other absences are managed effectively within agreed policies and procedures using defined tolerances. This way the Fire Service can provide an environment for staff to maintain their competency.

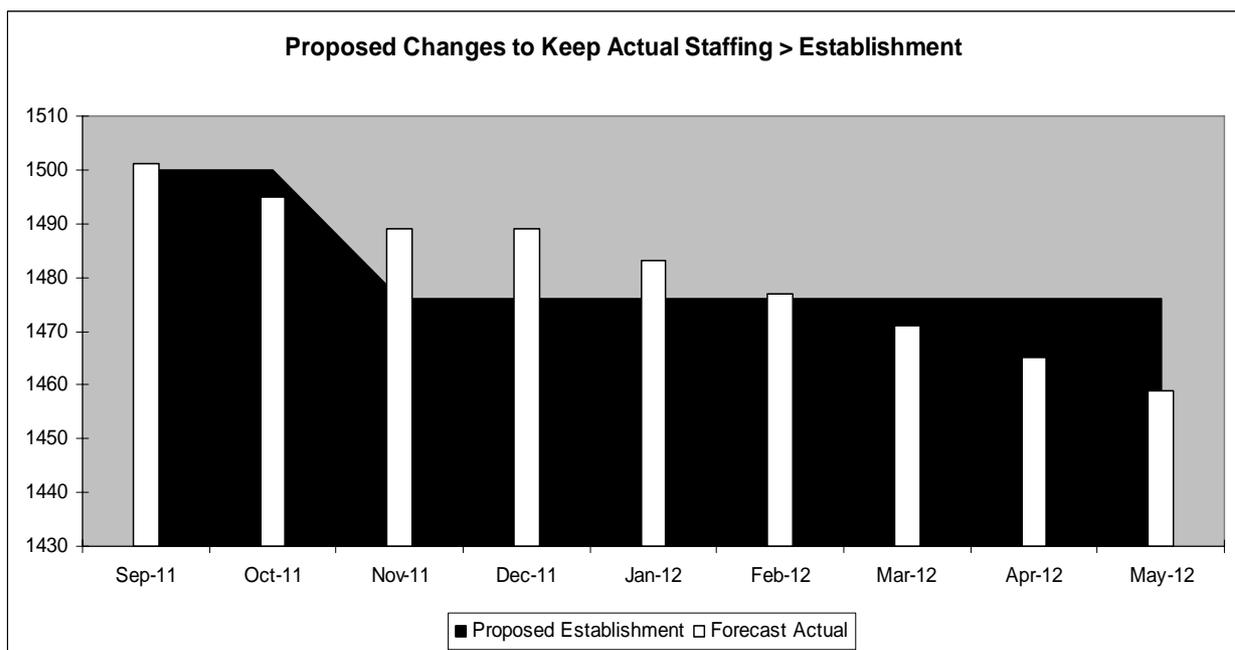
3.3 The decision to suspend recruitment taken in 2009 means that on average the establishment figure reduces by approximately six posts each month although it should be noted that this applies to all uniform staff and not just rider staff.

3.4 On 4 April 2011 the establishment figure for rider posts was reset to 1,500 people from 1,596 providing a total saving of 96 posts achieved through staff turnover.

3.5 Due to staff turnover rates described in paragraph 3.3 the strength is now slightly below the establishment. This means that the Fire Service must now reset the operating establishment again for the reasons described in 3.2. The following is the next reset proposed based on ongoing work within the BUS programme.

3.5.1 Re-distribute the 24 posts aligned to the late shift on Green and White watch that were put in place to provide resilience for Orange and Purple watch.

The following diagram demonstrates the change in the operating establishment and the forecast strength based on predicted leaver rates.



3.6 The proposed reset in establishment will require a minor rebalance of staff across the four core watches. This will maintain the Fire Service's ability to provide current service standards and appliance availability.

3.7 The proposed dates within the diagram are for illustration purposes although a reset around the date illustrated would have a beneficial effect on staffing over the Christmas period.

3.8 **Looking forward**: With the recruitment freeze set to continue through 2012-13 the next of these reports, with further changes to stations, appliances and staffing arrangements will be delivered around January 2012.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out, as any changes will be made in line with organisational policy and procedure.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial savings from the anticipated reductions will be calculated once they actually occur; this situation and the continued recruitment freeze will need to be considered within the Authority's overall budget setting process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER