



# Dorset Fire Authority

MEETING	Dorset Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	24 September 2014
OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Apprentices
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	At its meeting on 27 June 2014, the DFA considered a report on the potential to work in partnership with a college to employ five operational firefighter apprentices. Following a decision to move forward with Kingston Maurward College (KMC), this report provides a brief update on the selection process and initial timetable for the five operational firefighter apprentices.
RISK ASSESSMENT	Members have previously considered reports in relation to the age profile of DFRS operational staff. Whilst the operational firefighter apprentices will not be guaranteed a job, they may provide a pool for selection at some stage in the future.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	The five operational firefighter apprentices are employed by KMC with costs recovered from DFRS for salary. All stages of the selection process have been subject to a full Community Impact Assessment.  <i>Note: If the matrix indicates negative impacts on the community or staff, an equality impact assessment (EIA) will need to be completed.</i>
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	As previously reported on 27 June 2014, depending on the age profile of the operational firefighter apprentices, this ranges from £52,456 to £90,444.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that Members note the progress with KMC to provide five operational firefighter apprentices.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Operational firefighter apprentices - business case, DFA report 27 June 2014
APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Darran Gunter, Chief Fire Officer Tel: (01305) 252604

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 27 June 2014, the DFA considered a report that provided a business case for the approval of five operational firefighter apprentices in partnership with a suitable college. The report outlined a number of potential college partners and a decision was taken to work with KMC and to seek five operational firefighter apprentices.
- 1.2 The report outlined that, depending on the age profile of the five apprentices, then the annual funding would range from £52,456 to £90,444. This cost includes the recovery from DFERS of salary and the cost of a full-time trainer to co-ordinator and manage the apprentices. The net cost also took into account income we would receive in terms of the provision of training and the achievement of qualifications.
- 1.3 Finally, the report also outlined the benefits, issues and risks associated with an occupational firefighter apprentice scheme.
- 1.4 Following a decision to move forward with KMC, a timetable was quickly developed to ensure that the apprentice programme could commence in early October in line with the KMC academic year. The remainder of this report outlines the selection process that has been followed and the initial timetable for the five operational firefighter apprentices.

## 2. Advertisement

- 2.1 KMC placed an advert on the National Apprenticeship Scheme (NAS) website on Friday, 18 July 2014 with the intention of it staying live for two weeks. However, due to the overwhelming response (their admissions team took over 100 calls the following Monday morning and their reception team were also swamped with queries), on 21 July KMC asked to close the advert the following Friday.
- 2.2 Although the response rate may not seem high in comparison with say a WDS recruitment campaign, it is considered a very high response for an apprenticeship advert placed by KMC.
- 2.3 We had placed the following on our website vacancies page on 18 June 2014:

### **Apprentice Firefighters**

*"DFRS is pleased to be working with Kingston Maurward College to offer five apprentice firefighter placements. This new two year scheme will offer the opportunity to get on-the-job experience and training as well as gain nationally recognised qualifications.*

*For details of entry requirements (minimum age 18 years) and how to apply please go to:*

*[http://www.kmc.ac.uk/kc/the\\_college/apprenticeships/apprenticeship\\_vacancies](http://www.kmc.ac.uk/kc/the_college/apprenticeships/apprenticeship_vacancies)*

*It is sometimes necessary to close vacancies before the closing date due to an exceptional*

*response. Therefore as we anticipate a high level of interest for these places we recommend that you apply as soon as possible."*

- 2.4 KMC were advised that, if they were confident they would have sufficient applications, we could close the advert on 25 July and our vacancies page was amended on that date to read:

*"Please note we have closed the application process now for the apprenticeship placements due to the exceptionally high number of applications already received."*

### 3. Shortlisting

- 3.1 KMC received 39 applications, 11 from out of county applicants, three from female applicants and 36 from male applicants. They have requested further details from the NAS recruitment website, eg number of actual hits on the NAS website, breakdown of applicants' ages, ethnic origin, etc, but no further breakdown has been provided. It is not clear if this a case of NAS not being willing to share this information, or an inability to retrieve this information.
- 3.2 KMC conducted an initial sift and forwarded 26 applications to us for review. These were subsequently reviewed and 19 (1 female and 18 male) candidates were called to take part in the selection process.
- 3.3 Three of these candidates were fairly new RDS appointees. Contact was made with all three of them and they were advised that taking up the apprenticeship would mean resigning from their RDS contracts and, upon reflection, two of them opted to withdraw their apprentice applications.
- 3.4 One further candidate withdrew the day before the Stage 1 testing took place.

### 4. Testing and Interviewing

- 4.1 Following the initial sift, 16 applicants were invited to attend initial stage 1 testing, which involved a number of physical tests to ensure candidates have the minimum level of fitness and strength prior to proceeding to the practical tests at West Moors Training Centre (WMTC).
- 4.2 Whilst 16 candidates were invited to attend the initial stage 1 testing, three did not show up and two failed to meet the required standard, which subsequently resulted in 11 applicants going forward to the practical tests at WMTC. Candidates performed well at the Fire Service related physical tests at WMTC, with 10 of the 11 candidates being successful and invited to interview between 2-4 September.
- 4.3 The interviews were conducted by DFRS staff with representatives from KMC attending the initial interview briefing. KMC also attended the initial stage 1 and 2 of the testing and selection process.

- 4.4 As a result of the interviews, 9 number of individuals have now been scheduled for eyesight and medical checks which will take place between 8-10 September. We are also in the process of seeking references and progressing Disclosing and Barring checks for these individuals.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 During the week commencing 15 September, staff from HR will be reviewing all results, including medicals and references. It is probable that potential recruits will be informed whether they are successful or not during this week.
- 5.2 On 6 October, the apprentice programme will commence with an initial two week induction. This will have followed a prior induction with KMC to explain the apprenticeship route and the various requirements in terms of academic achievement. The two week induction with DFRS will involve the usual familiarisation of key policies and procedures, but we will also take the opportunity to ensure that the apprentices have a tour of the Service and are introduced early to our wider functions of prevention and protection. They will also be required to undertake pre-BRR training in readiness for their basic retained recruits course that follows their induction.
- 5.3 By mid-January the apprentices will have completed the standard courses currently available (BRR - two weeks, BA - two weeks, RTC - two days, Casualty Care - three days and Corporate Induction). From January they will attend KMC one day a month to work toward their BTEC qualification. This will be undertaken by DFRS staff and a KMC Lecturer.
- 5.4 It was reassuring that a number of watches have volunteered to host the apprentices. However, in order to ensure that we can schedule off-watch activities, it is probable that we will assign them initially to the same colour watch.
- 5.5 Looking ahead, we are commencing visits to ensure that the apprentices have wider experience in terms of key partnership activities and potentially a short secondment of the Fire Service College to allow them to experience a range of unique training opportunities and scenarios. It is intended that the apprentices will provide a short display to DFA Members in early 2015 to demonstrate progress on their FRS journey.

**DARRAN GUNTER**  
Chief Fire Officer

17 September 2014