

**TO:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

**FROM:** Chief Officer Group  
(Chris Strickland, Matthew Warren and Jon Anderson)

**PRESENTING OFFICER:** Chief Fire Officer Chris Strickland

Telephone 01480 444500  
[chris.strickland@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.strickland@cambsfire.gov.uk)

**DATE:** 10 February 2022

---

## **RE-ENGAGEMENT OF AREA COMMANDER SIMON NEWTON**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Fire Authority of the decision by the Chief Officer Group to re-engage Area Commander Simon Newton on a fixed term contract.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Authority is asked to note the decision and make comment as appropriate.

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 **Political** – the Fire and Rescue Framework for England requires decisions on re-engagement of Officers below the level of Principal Officer to be time limited, justifiable and transparent. Failure to appropriately inform Members of the decision to re-engage a strategic level manager could result in a failure of required transparency, albeit the requirements are not specific.
- 3.2 **Economic** – there is little economic risk as re-engagement is a cost-effective solution when applied appropriately and for business continuity reasons.
- 3.3 **Social** – there is a risk that internal staff will react negatively to the re-engagement of a strategic level Officer. This will be mitigated by ensuring the decision is explained to the organisation in an open and transparent way.
- 3.4 **Technological, Legal and Environmental** – no significant risks identified.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Over recent years the Service has seen a significant number of senior Officers move on via promotion to other fire and rescue services. Whilst this has been helpful for the career development of those moving on and an enabler for

talented individuals within the organisation wishing to progress, it has caused an increasing loss of organisational experience and knowledge at the middle and strategic management levels.

- 4.2 Due to the amount of movement in staff this has significantly increased the potential for making avoidable mistakes as newly appointed staff have to learn on the job, via a degree of trial and error, as a result of insufficient decision making support. This creates additional and avoidable pressure on staff who have wide ranging organisational knowledge and are required to engage in greater levels of tactical detail at the expense of moving forward other priority, strategic level, work.
- 4.3 Whilst the Service is blessed with a strong cadre of talented individuals who, with appropriate support and experience, will be eminently capable of moving further through the organisational structure, the sheer number of new and inexperienced staff means that promoting more people at this time may well create significant risk. Exploring the market for additional talent is an approach normally taken to increase the Service talent pool, however for the reasons outlined above, it cannot solve the current but relatively temporary issue of a lack of specific knowledge and experience that ensured the evolution of CFRS into the forward thinking, engaged and high performing organisation it is today.
- 4.4 A useful way of retaining organisational knowledge and experience and smoothing out peaks in natural wastage is to re-engage recently retired staff for fixed periods of time. This practice has been utilised by the Service for many years and proven to be a useful and cost-effective tool. From an organisational perspective it saves employer pension costs, from the public purse perspective it saves the cost of an individual's monthly pension payments and from the individuals perspective it enables them to take their lump sum payment and be employed without the requirement to contribute further to their crystallised pension scheme. It does, however mean that their pension payments are reduced to ensure they earn no more in real terms than they did prior to retirement.

## **5. RE-ENGAGEMENT OF AREA COMMANDER SIMON NEWTON**

- 5.1 Area Commander Simon Newton will be retiring in the middle of 2022, having completed 30 years of service. The loss of the only member of the uniformed area command team with significant domain knowledge and experience is undesirable for the reasons outlined above.
- 5.2 This is further exacerbated by the fact that the group command team is relatively inexperienced; this will be further impacted imminently by the loss of at least one of the two remaining longest serving Officers to another fire and rescue service.
- 5.3 With this in mind the Chief Officer Group has asked Simon to re-engage on a fixed term contract to enable the Service to retain his valued and highly effective contribution to Chief Officer Advisory Group and to assist us in

ensuring our newer Officers at group command level are able to build their knowledge and experience by accessing his wide ranging and trusted counsel.

- 5.4 Under the terms of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England any re-engagement must be justifiable, time limited and transparent. The Chief Officer Group believes the decision meets the first two criteria and in order to ensure transparency it is presented to Members in this public forum.

Source Document	Location	Contact Officer
Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705060/National_Framework_-_final_for_web.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705060/National_Framework_-_final_for_web.pdf</a>	Chris Strickland 01480 444506 <a href="mailto:chris.strickland@cambsfire.gov.uk">chris.strickland@cambsfire.gov.uk</a>