



**FIRE AUTHORITY**

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26 October 2022

Andy Cooke QPM DL  
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services  
23 Stephenson Street  
Birmingham  
B2 4BH

**SENT BY EMAIL – [Andrew.Cooke@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Cooke@hmicfrs.gov.uk)**

Dear Andy

**HM Chief Inspector's Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England**

Further to your letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022 in relation to the above I attach the response from Cleveland Fire Brigade at Annex A for your consideration.

Should you require clarification or further discussions on any matters please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Councillor Paul Kirton  
Chair Cleveland Fire Authority**

**Ian Hayton  
Chief Fire Officer**

### HM Chief Inspector's Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England: Response from Cleveland Fire Brigade

#### A: The Things that Cleveland Fire Brigade Does Well

##### Effectiveness

- We are at the forefront of risk management; leading the NFCC's risk management work and have a **'good understanding of local risks'** (HMICFRS) that is fundamental to keeping people safe, providing an effective service and identifying vulnerability within our community.
- Our approach to managing risk has resulted in us achieving **one of the lowest rates of accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population in the country**; this involved the provision of prevention, protection and emergency response services that focus on the most vulnerable.
- Our local communities receives an 'equal entitlement' to our emergency response service to fires in the home. We have **one of the fastest responses in the country** in this respect.

##### Efficiency

- Our clear, **strategic risk and resource plans are all aligned**
- We **consistently secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in our use of resources** as evidenced in our unqualified opinions from our External Auditors, currently Mazars.
- We can easily evidence that **we have truly done more with less**. Despite significant financial (£11.539m) and steep human resource (24% total workforce, 33% whole-time firefighters) reductions we have achieved strong performance outcomes through innovative business approaches and high levels of productivity. Indeed we have the **highest rates of staff productivity and are continually improving**

**Prevention:** Safer Homes Visits: at our 2022 inspection Home Office (HO) stats 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2021 showed that we had one of the highest rate of SHVs per 1,000 population (27.3); **six times more than the national average** (4.62). The recently published stats (31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2022) show that **CFB's employees are even more productive**, delivering 36.11 SHVs per 1,000 population; **nine times greater** than the England average of 4.09.

**Protection:** Fire Safety Audits: at our 2022 inspection HO stats 31<sup>st</sup> Mar **2021** showed that we undertook 5.3 fire safety audits per 100 known premises; **three times more than the national average** (1.7). The recently published stats (31<sup>st</sup> Mar **2022**) show that **CFB's employees are even more productive**, delivering 11.16 audits per 100 known premises; **five times greater than the England average** of 2.03.

**Emergency Response:** at our **2022** inspection HO stats 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2021 showed that **we responded to the highest number of incidents** per 1,000 population (13.58); the England average (9.16). The latest, recently published stats (31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2022) show that **CFB's employees are responding to 17.32 incidents per 1,000 population with the England average being 2.02.**

- Our **innovative, good practice, new public sector business operating model** augments the capacity of lifesaving services with community volunteers that are financially supported through our commercially trading Community Interest Company. In **addition, our self-funding Commissioned Services business model is adding value** in the delivery of discretionary services on behalf of other business partners.
- As a result of our prevention, protection and emergency response interventions Cleveland Fire Brigade has **impressive added social and economic value for its communities** in Teesside - £34 million as a result of its prevention work and £10.2 million in respect of emergency response.

## **People**

- As the national lead for health and wellbeing we have a comprehensive wellbeing strategy that delivers a wide range of mental and physical wellbeing services including counselling, physiotherapy, advice, screening and accelerated medical support.
- we have a strong culture of health and safety
- we have a clear, embedded values and behaviours framework that incorporates the national Code of Ethics and is understood and demonstrated by staff at all levels of the organisation

## **B: The Most Pressing Areas for Reform in the Fire Sector**

In order to reflect societal, environmental changes and risk in an ever-changing world the fire and rescue service (FRS) needs to evolve and reform. To continue its journey of continuous improvement the service needs to:

- Clarify the future service delivery role of the FRS to enable the use of the duties, capabilities, and people to respond to major event and emergencies within the local community context, irrespective of the type and nature of the incident.
- Reform to enable the FRS to play a more active role in supporting the ambulance service and the wider health and public safety agenda. For example, support the ambulance service when emergency casualty care demand is high; and further expand the emergency medical care response capability of the fire and rescue service.
- Improve the 'Fair Funding' system to ensure that there is a levelling up of the distribution of resources thereby eradicating the perennial winners and losers' philosophy.
- Disaggregate the relationship between the role of a firefighter and the pay mechanism. The historic role-maps (2003) stymie the role of firefighters in delivering the Fire Authority's community risk management plan.
- Whilst appreciating the firefighters' right to strike, we need to strengthen the statutory provisions within the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) to support business continuity arrangements in the event of disruptive industrial action. Unless any legislative change, through the CCA or elsewhere, comes with the requirement to establish a minimum service agreement, we will only ever provide a base level of operational cover in the event of industrial action.
- Reform current arrangements for negotiating pay in the FRS. These arrangements are not delivering satisfactory outcomes for firefighters, FRSs and, most importantly, the public. Future pay negotiation arrangements must ensure that all relevant stakeholders have a clear voice and the ability to influence the direction taken. At present the CFA, who are required to deliver the expectations on the sector from government and ultimately the public, has limited opportunity to influence a fair outcome as 'affordability' is always the over-riding criteria. The government, who ultimately hold the purse strings and set the fiscal policy, are not represented in the negotiation process and this appears to hamper progress with either pay or changes to terms and conditions.

- Everyone involved with the FRS sector, from central Government to locally elected Members of Authorities, aspire to deliver good governance, however any reforms in respect of governance are best determined at a local level, with local communities, circumstances, authorities, and priorities deciding what governance structure would work best locally to affect real change and improvement.

### **C: Local and National Changes that have Occurred or are Planned in Response to the Second Round of Inspections – the Effect They have had or that We Expect**

**Protection** – the focus on prioritising building safety work resulted in services continuing the general positive shift of emphasis. Here in Cleveland, this manifested itself in:

- a new Risk Based Inspection Programme that targeted the highest risk premises as determined by our locally applied relative risk matrix
- the adoption of the new Fire protection Standard with associated improvement plan
- an Investment in protection staff and developing all staff in line with the National Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators
- an increase in station-based productivity in fire safety audits from 5.3 fire safety audits per 100 known premises (three times more than the national average of 1.7) at 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2021 to 11.16 audits per 100 known premises (five times greater than the England average of 2.03) at 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2022
- actively implementing the learning from major national events such as Grenfell Tower and The Cube
- the use of digital and data technology to support protection service provision

**Prevention** – the inspection reports highlighted that some services did not prioritise prevention activity enough placing people, including vulnerable individuals at greater risk from fire. In response we have:

- developed a new Community Engagement Strategy 2020-24 which puts better focus on engagement with groups such as BAME, disability and mental health. The Strategy aims to improve our insight relating to our diverse and hard to reach communities and is being implemented through a cross-cutting Community Engagement Delivery Group supported by a cadre of Community Engagement Champions.
- further enhanced our targeting methodology for Safer Homes Visits to focus on those people who are most at risk; our stations plans now require our personnel to follow a hierarchical approach to planning Safer Homes Visits by prioritising Very High and High risks first - our aim is to target 20,000 Safer Homes Visits per year

- increased station-based productivity in Safer Homes Visits from delivering 27.3 SHVs per 1,000 population (six times more than the national average of 4.62) at 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2021 to delivering 36.11 SHVs per 1,000 population (nine times greater than the England average of 4.09) as at 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2022
- improved our approach to urgent referrals and reactive Safer Homes Visits, by prioritising them as Very High, High risk within our methodology
- introduced a Befriending service through our Commissioned Services team of volunteers who are trained in safeguarding
- refreshed our road safety risk profile to identify the most at risk groups in relation to RTC deaths and injuries; this allows us to better target our road safety education programme

**Values and Culture** – although the HMICFRS inspections highlighted concern, in some FRSs, over the promotion of values and lack of a positive professional culture, here in Cleveland we have had a clear set of values and behaviours framework in place for over ten years. Our latest iteration of the framework is well understood and demonstrated by all staff at all levels of the organisation. The development of the *Core Code of Ethic r Fire and Rescue Services* was incorporated within our well-established Framework.

**Workforce and Succession Planning** – HMICFRS highlighted that while improvements to workforce and succession planning were improving, some services demonstrated poor planning resulting in actual and potential skills shortages. In response we have:

- developed an improved system to better support the identification of, and development for, those individuals with high potential
- expanded our PDRpro competence recording system to improve the recording and monitoring of competencies of all staff and a centralised database for training records
- rolled out PDR training on the new competency recording system across the whole workforce and produced guidance notes to assist staff in its use
- improved the recording of annual appraisals through an electronic PDR system
- implemented leadership and management development aligned to the NFCC Core Learning Pathway

- embedded our values and ethical behaviours into our PDR electronic recording system
- been awarded Approved Centre with Skills for Justice (Fire) to deliver Fire Investigation (Level 1) qualification
- developed a facility called 'The Edge' on our new business platform (The Bridge). This provides access to a wide range of electronic learning resources to support individuals and team in their maintenance of competence
- fully adopted the NFCC Operational Competence Fire Standard

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion** – the HMICFRS highlighted the issue of under-representation in the FRS particularly in regard to gender and ethnicity characteristics. To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity and make our workforce more representative, we have:

- ensured our recruitment activities are accessible to all of Cleveland's communities
- introduced a new 'Approach to Positive Action' which sets out four objectives relating to identifying and removing barriers to attraction; enhancing our employer brand; providing meaningful career and development opportunities and monitoring workforce trends.
- Fundamental to our new approach, is a Positive Action Recruitment Team comprising of volunteer Recruitment Ambassadors from across our workforce and recently retired staff. Working to our Positive Action Approach we have:
  - introduced a 'Positive Action Recruitment Campaign Plan'
  - introduced an evaluation requirement following each recruitment campaign that is presented to the Executive Leadership Team
  - established an on-going advertising campaign for on-call staff
  - developed our targeting resources to include females and BAME firefighters; and vacancies advertised through diverse associations e.g. AFSA, Women in the FS
  - established a 'buddy' system to provide support to people from under-represented during the recruitment and induction processes
  - worked with specific communities, schools, and colleges
  - created a new 'IN' brand for EDI which covers a range of topics such as 'Join IN' which gives details re CFB and application stages; and 'IN Shape' which provides fitness and nutrition information to support preparations for 'Point of Entry Tests'
  - involved staff network groups in the recruitment campaigns and selection processes
  - ran 'taster' days to provide females with the opportunity to 'have a go' at incident command



## **D: CFB's Implementation of the Learning and Recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019)**

Phase 1 of the Grenfell Inquiry report was released on 30th Oct 2019. In advance of the Report being published, CFB had already undertaken a Critical Incident review to identify the initial lessons that could be learned from the fire and implement immediate appropriate control measures. This resulted in an initial Action Plan being produced and monitored by an internal Operational Assurance Action Group.

The Brigade established a dedicated steering group to look at the 46 recommendations in the Phase Inquiry 1 Report and develop a 'Grenfell Action Plan' to address the requirements of the Report. Recognising the complexity and likely duration of this work, the Brigade re-purposed the steering group and the ACFO Community Protection was assigned as the Senior Responsible Officer.

We have implemented a local priority delivery plan, which contains a comprehensive suite of actions, originating from the following sources:

- Grenfell Tower Phase 1 Inquiry Report (October 2019)
- Critical Incident Review - Cleveland Fire Brigade (December 2019)
- Update on Operational Policy Report – NFCC (March 2020)
- Delivery of Recommendations Report – NFCC (August 2020)
- Inspection of the London Fire Brigade's progress to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 Report (February 2021)

To focus delivery against recommendations, the NFCC Delivery Against Recommendations Report grouped the 46 inquiry recommendations into 11 categories, which form the basis of Cleveland Fire Brigades local priority delivery plan:

- Collaboration
- Command and Control
- Compartmentation
- Competence
- Consistency
- Debrief/Learning
- Equipment
- Evacuation
- Fire Survival Guidance
- JESIP
- Premises Information

### **Local Priority Delivery Plan**

A Local Priority Delivery Plan has been established, which is based on local risk. The Plan focusses delivery against the wider recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The priority plan sets out the following: Priority – Based on local risk; Category – Aligned to NFCC Delivery of Recommendations Report; Activity; Actions to undertake; Resources; Costs; Desired outcome; Responsible person and Required completion date

In terms of deciding the priority order, the Brigade carefully considered which of the 46 recommendations would have the greatest impact in respect of community and organisational risk. In addition, consideration was given to the recommendations that are achievable and fall within the control of Cleveland Fire Brigade.

Any actions that fall outside of the Priority Delivery Plan, such as changes to the JESIP Doctrine, fire safety legislation and National Operational Guidance continue to be monitored by the Grenfell Task Group and actioned as soon as it is practicable to do so. As national guidance and legislation develops, the priority action plan is reviewed and updated as required.

### **Progress to Date**

In terms of the wider recommendations and actions made in the Phase Inquiry 1 Report, progress to date is as follows:

<b>Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Pending	39	23%
In Progress	72	42%
Complete	61	35%

Table 1: Summary of actions from Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations

Progress against the local priority delivery plan has delivered the following outcomes in 2021/22:

Priority No	Category	Activity	Outcome
2	Debrief and Learning	Adopt NOG for BA	BA procedures compliant with NOG
3	Competence	Ensure sufficient protection resources are maintained to meet the Competence Framework	Staff in place and development plan in progress
4	Command and Control	Implement electronic command support capability	Electronic occupancy register in place
5	Competence	Upskill inspecting officers – Fire door inspection	Training in place
7	Premises Information	Develop the Capability for CAD plans to be accessed by Control and in a useable format at the incident ground	CAD plans available to Fire Control and operational staff
8	Collaboration	Consider Data sharing from Police helicopters (NPAS downlink)	It is not possible for Cleveland Police to share live video from Police helicopters
10	Competence	Adoption of JESIP Doctrine	Embedded into policy and procedure
11	Evacuation Procedures	Review evacuation procedures for high rise buildings	High Rise SOP A1 reviewed and amended to include revised evacuation procedures
12	Testing of radio communications and BA duration in all high-rise buildings	Radio communications tested and effective  BA duration tested and sufficient	Radio communications and BA duration have been identified as sufficient

Table 2: Summary of completed actions from local priority delivery plan

### **Financial Commitment**

The Brigade received grant funding to support the coordination of local activity in relation to the 46 recommendations and support the national work led by the NFCC. Funding of £206,500.00 has been ring fenced for Grenfell activity and to resource the local priority delivery plan.

### **Building Risk Review/Protection Uplift**

The Brigade reviewed its risk-based inspection programme and the methodology used to identify high risk premises. A proposal and business case were developed that includes the definitions utilised within the competency framework for higher risk premises.

In addition to re-evaluating how we identify high risk premises, the review of our risk-based inspection programme generates an annual inspection schedule that requires an appropriate level of resourcing.

On the basis of the 46 recommendations in the Phase Inquiry 1 Report, resources were increased to support the Building Risk Review and bolster the protection capability. This was to deliver our Risk Based Inspection Programme and Integrated Risk Management Plan. A brief summary of the additional resources committed to this area is as follows:

- establishment of a Technical Fire Safety Manager Post
- additional 4 x Fire Safety Advisor posts
- upskilling staff to Level 5 Diploma – Fire Engineering Design

## E: The Challenges We Face in Making our Service more Efficient and Effective

Set against our unique and complex risk profile and in light of previous significant financial and human resource reductions we believe that there are a number of key challenges to making our service more efficient and effective.

### Our Constantly Changing Landscape

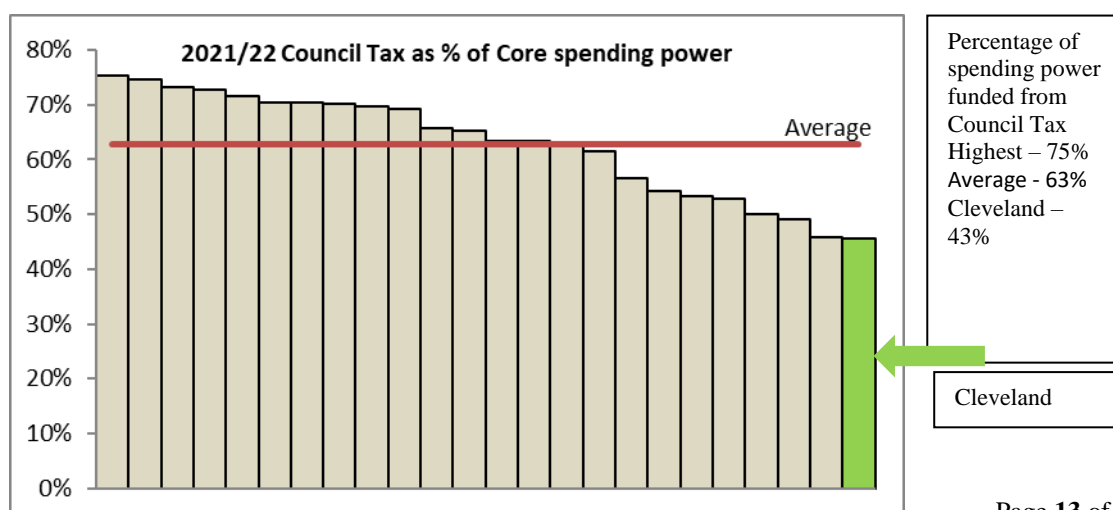
- the Tees Valley Combined Authority has major plans for Teesside over the next ten years with ambitions to have a World Class Transport System and to attract even more inward investment from the energy, renewable, offshore, manufacturing and engineering sectors.
- Teesside is set to become the UK's first and largest free port.
- climate change and terrorism will continue to bring about their own very different challenges
- community profile changes such as more diverse people and an increase in the number of people aged over 65 years will impact our services demand. As will Generation Y and their need to be connected, mobile, independent and self-serving.

Recent evidence from the National Risk project moves CFB into the Metropolitan Family Group of FRSs for comparison purposes.

### Sustainable Funding

As you are aware FRAs are funded from a combination of council tax precept income, business rates and government grants (Revenue Support Grant, Top-Up grant, section 31 grant related to Business Rates relief and section 31 grant for pensions).

The area we serve has a low Council Tax base (i.e. higher than average proportion of properties in Band A and B). This means the Authority raises a much lower percentage of funding from Council Tax than FRAs in more affluent areas, as highlighted below:



As a FRA you will appreciate we have no control over planning decisions to approve new housing developments, which increase the Council Tax base. We are well aware that even though the councils in our area do all they can to encourage housing growth the ability to shift the balance of the Council Tax base towards higher value properties is determined by local economic conditions and the affordability of housing. The reality of the situation is the percentage of our spending power funded from Council Tax will remain low and probably never match the FRA average. In addition the Authority's Band D Council Tax for 2022/23 is £81.86, slightly above the FRA average of £80.54. The Authority has carefully considered the level of Council Tax each year and increased it in line with referendum limits as Members have carefully balanced the financial position of our residents and the funding the Authority needs to keep the community safe.

#### Local Political and Trade Union Objections to Reform

The White Paper, 'Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service', builds on a legacy of reform and sets out the government's vision for making services and those working within them more able to work efficiently and effectively, and to adapt to the changing risks and the public safety challenges and emergencies, the Service faces, both now and into the future.

The intention to strengthen the fire and rescue service across England in responding to emergencies, as well as sharpen their focus on their prevention and protection functions is, however, not without its challenges. For example, the wider adoption of a governance model to centre accountability on a single directly elected executive leader has widespread opposition from locally elected members, trade union bodies, the workforce and most importantly, the public. Equally, the trade union response to the White Paper is viewed simply as an attack on the terms and conditions of firefighters.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of national and/or locally enacted fire reforms will receive a mixed reception from the various stakeholders who will hold entrenched positions that stymie progress and potentially erode public confidence in a highly regarded public service.

#### On-Call Availability

The national challenge of on-call firefighter availability presents many services with capacity problems in some areas of their operation.

In Cleveland, on-call firefighters account for 23 percent of the firefighter establishment. They are essential in making sure services have enough firefighters to crew fire engines to meet foreseeable risks. Despite concerted local efforts to create and maintain the conditions necessary to attract and retain enough firefighters to crew engines when they are needed, we, like many services, have a shortage of crews available at a significant number of our on-

call stations. This low availability – mainly during office hours – makes it a risk to rely on on-call crewed engines as part of the minimum crewing arrangements.

Following an on-call review and the establishment of a bespoke action plan, we continue to strive to find more innovative ways to attract, develop, maintain, and retain an essential component of our emergency response capability including providing greater flexibility in working arrangements and establishing other financial incentives.

The challenge, however, perpetuates with many services having serious misgivings about the sustainability of the on-call model and as the previous HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services said, “...that there needs to be a national solution...” to mitigate this problem.

## **F: Our Current People Priorities and the Challenges we Face to Implement our People Strategy**

Our People Plan is designed to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills, attitudes and behaviours in the right place doing the right things to deliver the priorities of our Community Risk Management Plan. It sets out our approaches (strategies) for the next four years across the four themes within our People Framework these being Talent Management, Health and Safety, Health and Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

### **Talent Management Priorities 2026**

1. Workforce Planning: to align our changing organisational needs with our People Plan
2. Attract: to be recognised as an Employer of Choice
3. Identify: to identify potential future leaders, senior managers and individuals to fill business critical roles
4. Development: to improve training through the use of reflective learning and digital technology
5. Development: to ensure all staff are competent to undertake their role
6. Development: to have resilient, flexible, accountable leaders who create a compelling vision, drive improvement and 'Do the Right Thing'
7. Retain: to have a high level of workforce retention
8. Transition: to have transition arrangements that mutually supports staff and the organisation

### **Health and Safety Priorities 2026**

9. Legally Compliant: to continue to be compliant with all health and safety statutory and legal duties and responsibilities
10. Competence: to have a competent workforce to carry out their health and safety responsibilities
11. Culture: to have a positive health and safety culture where staff understand their responsibilities and are comfortable to report concerns and managers lead by example, taking necessary action
12. Communications: to create a workforce environment that enables effective and open communications with staff
13. Controls: to have workplaces where risks are controlled



## **Health and Wellbeing Priorities 2026**

14. Physical Health: to support employees in their Physical Health to remain at or return to work
15. Mental Health: to support employees in their Mental Health to remain at or return to work
16. Firefighter Fitness: To have an increasing number of firefighters achieving and maintaining the standards of personal fitness
17. Health Promotion: to promote healthy lifestyles and provide access to information and advice to enable our employees to look after their own health, fitness and wellbeing

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities 2026**

18. Legal Compliance: to be compliant with all equality, diversity and inclusion legislation
19. Equality: to have people policies and processes that provide equality of opportunity and are free from discrimination
20. Diverse Workforce: to have a workforce that increasingly reflects the communities we serve
21. Inclusive Culture: to have a working environment where our employees feel they can be themselves and where they can grow to be the best they can be.

## **Challenges we Face to Implementing our People Priorities**

- Significant workforce reductions have resulted in reduced capacity and capability to deliver our priorities to meet national and local demands
- Recruitment and retention of critical business roles as a result of public and private sector pay differentials e.g. fire engineering, technical ICT posts
- Changing talent pipeline – more corporate staff doing specialist roles – so internal succession planning is limited and therefore we have to recruit more from the external market and as previously mentioned this brings about competition from the private sector
- The pool of Grey Book staff with an appetite for promotion to more senior roles has reduced as a result of secondary employment and workforce reductions
- The well-rehearsed issues associated with the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters
- Constraints of the 'Grey Book' rigid terms and conditions

## **G: Our Biggest Challenges in Making our Service More Representative of the Community we Serve**

### **Attraction**

- Public perception of the role of a firefighter is still one of responding to emergencies rather than the broader role that a modern firefighter undertakes
- Public perceptions within some cultural groups are that the Fire Service is not an Employer of Choice
- Our communities do not naturally identify with our current Employer brand
- Catchment areas:
  - small numbers of BME living in concentrated districts in our area
  - on-call catchment areas have very low numbers of BME
  - society has changed – younger people are moving out of the villages away from traditional employment such as farming and local small businesses to take up greater employment opportunities in towns and cities
- Local low educational attainment and resultant skill shortage

### **Recruitment Process**

- Local political decision to recruit whole-time firefighters only from those who live in Teesside in order to boost employment (a good thing) reduces the 'employment pool' and hence the pool of diverse applicants who are able to meet the entry level requirements i.e. Level 2