

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY K.G. PAMPLIN OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th JUNE 2019**

Question

Will the Minister detail how many unfilled posts there have been in the States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service in the past 18 months and state the projected number required to maintain the service for the next 18 months; and will he indicate what the current annual budget is for the Service, what the annual budget was in 2017 and what budget for 2020 he plans to put forward for inclusion in the Government Plan?

Answer

There are two types of firefighter contract; 'wholetime' (full-time) and 'on-call' (retained firefighters whose primary employment is outside of the Service but who, with support of their employer, are contracted to training duties and to providing cover to respond to emergencies when required). This latter area, due to the demands placed upon the on-call firefighter and their employer, often experiences the greatest challenges in attracting, recruiting and retaining people. There are currently 67 wholetime posts and 42 on-call posts as well as a very small team of non-uniformed support staff.

Notice periods range from one to three months, however recruiting and basic training takes considerably longer; this is the main cause of unfilled vacancies.

Since January 2018, where the Service was already one firefighter below funded establishment, 13 wholetime firefighters, in various ranks up to and including the Chief Fire Officer, have resigned or retired from service. During this period, the Service has recruited eight wholetime firefighters and two, fixed-term civil servants. A further two firefighters are due to commence basic training at the Fire Service College in September. The highest number of unfilled vacancies in the wholetime area of the Service at any point, was eight.

Against this backdrop, and the recruitment and training happening throughout this year, I expect all but two wholetime, operational firefighter posts currently funded, to be filled. The outstanding posts, as well as being operational firefighter roles, are also highly skilled and specialised fire safety officers and I know the acting Chief Fire Officer is considering the best way to address this crucial issue. I have directed the acting Chief Fire Officer to make every effort to ensure all 67 funded, wholetime operational posts are filled as soon as possible.

During the same period, 12 on-call firefighters have left service through resignation or retirement. Again, the Service was, through normal turnover, already below funded establishment in this area and so the impact was exacerbated. However, 11 of these vacancies have now been filled and a further six firefighters will undertake basic training starting next month. By the end of the summer, this area will be three posts below funded establishment.

2017 annual budget: £5,673,771

2018 annual budget: £5,662,351

2019 annual budget: £5,513,890

The 2020 budget is still being developed as part of the Government Plan process.