

WEST MIDLANDSFIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JULY 2023

1. **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT –
PROGRESS REPORT**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT progress be noted by Members of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update on the Scrutiny Review of Training Development commissioned in April 2023.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The key deliverable of the review:

- 3.1.1 Establish if the training and development approach taken by West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) achieves the needs of the Service, in particular groups that are underrepresented in leadership roles.
- 3.1.2 Identify the role of innovation and technology to enable approaches to training and development in improving effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility for all staff with particular attention to neurodiversity.
- 3.1.3 Actions to ensure inclusiveness and equality in how training is developed and delivered for all staff, especially those from groups which are currently underrepresented within the service.

- 3.1.4 Staff and specifically recruit experiences of training and development, what works well, and where further improvement could be made.
- 3.2. In January 2023, Scrutiny Committee chose Training and Development as the topic for their next formal review. Following this decision, officers developed the terms of reference and methodology for the review in line with the agreed areas of focus approved by the Committee on the 23 April 2023.
- 3.3. Members will note the HMICFRS published their Spotlight Report on Culture and Values in the Fire and Rescue Service. This review has included several specific recommendations for the sector around the training and development of staff, including how services should take steps to improve inclusion and diversity, and provide greater focus on leadership development. This Scrutiny Review supports the Service's wider response to the HMICFRS report.
- 3.4. In line with the Scrutiny Committee's own Terms of Reference, it is intended that the review will be member-led. Following the Authority's AGM, at which Scrutiny Members were appointed, the engagement with staff network groups and key stakeholders will be undertaken through face-to-face focus groups led by Scrutiny Committee members throughout August and September 2023.
- 3.5. It is intended that the final Scrutiny Report will be completed by October 2023. This will be followed 12-months later by a follow-up report to determine what progress has been made on recommendations made in October 2024.

4. **PROGRESS UP-DATES**

The following up-dates are provided.

4.1. **Talent Pool Development**

- 4.1.1 The Service is developing a talent pool approach to recruitment and selection, aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Behavioural Framework. This enables individuals to demonstrate the behaviours accepted during several behavioural activities. The pilot began in March for aspiring Group Managers, this has resulted in several individuals embarking on development

opportunities across the Service. The learning and feedback are shaping the development of future talent pools.

4.1.2 To achieve the development and progression needs of the Service, in particular groups that are underrepresented in leadership roles, a programme is being developed. The programme will provide individuals with support and mentoring to prepare them for the talent pool process, this will be piloted through the summer with individuals applying for the Station Commander talent pool process in September. The Neurodiversity Networking Group are sharing lived experiences and feedback to shape the process moving forward.

4.1.3 The role of the manager is key in identifying and supporting talent. A number of sessions are planned for managers to support them in how to identify and nurture talent in their teams.

4.2 **Competency Risk Assessment**

4.2.1 The Competency Risk Assessment (CRA) supports West Midlands Fire Service Competency Framework, which is reviewed annually to determine currency of activities that individuals complete for them to undertake their role.

4.2.2 Individual competency is demonstrated through a robust standardised assessment approach, workplace assessments, activity roles, and the completion of E-Learning frequencies.

4.2.3 The CRA Committee, are in the process of reviewing the e-Learn frequencies and content. The review of the content is being done in collaboration with a range of stakeholders to ensure they encompass a range of learning styles and neurodiversity. The use of immersive and innovative technology and digital platforms enables this inclusive approach.

4.2.4 All current E-Learning content is programmed for review, it is important to note, due to the number of E-Learn packages and new content required to be developed, this will take an extended period due to the capacity of the team.

4.3 **Trainee Firefighter Development Programme**

- 4.3.1 A key objective for the WMFS Training and Development Programme is to ensure it aligns to national best practice and maximises the learning experience for staff ensuring our staff are knowledgeable, competent, and confident in their abilities.
- 4.3.2 The Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) is a significant milestone in a Firefighter's career, it is the start of their journey, providing them with the skills and knowledge to development into competent and confident Firefighters.
- 4.3.3 A review of the TFDP has been conducted, this review took into consideration a range of evidence and feedback from staff to determine areas for consideration for review and/or change.
- 4.3.4 In conjunction with the review and as part of our commitment to setting everyone up to succeed, we have commissioned an external review of the employee experience through TFDP. This was undertaken by Real World HR to support us to identify where continuous improvement can be made.
- 4.3.5 As a result, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has approved the extension and inclusion of the following areas:
- Introducing enhanced opportunity to understand and develop a positive culture, values, and behaviours.
 - Building understanding of the Service's People Policies.
 - Further development and learning opportunities in safety critical areas such as breathing apparatus, working at height, water rescue and building knowledge and understanding of working effectively with blue light partners.
 - Building an effective on-boarding and station integration and mentoring programme.
 - Tailored learning options to support underrepresented groups.
- 4.3.6 To provide the appropriate time to acquire knowledge, build understanding and apply in a safe environment will require a twelve-week TFDP.

- 4.3.7 The revised TFDP will commence from August 2023. This approach enables WMFS, in the future, to align its TFDP programme to the Firefighter apprenticeship.

4.4 **Trainee Firefighter Apprenticeship Programme**

- 4.4.1 The Trainee Firefighter Apprenticeship Programme will be developed in the People Programme over the next 12 months.

4.5 **Distributed Training Model**

- 4.5.1 WMFS operates a Distributed Training Model (DTM) to ensure that staff are trained and competent in their role. The Service is committed to continual improvement and ensuring our staff are 'set up' to succeed, it is now timely to conduct another review to ensure the DTM fully supports our staff to be highly competent, safe, effective, and assertive when responding to incidents. A Terms of Reference is being developed to support this review.

4.6 **Career and Development Pathways**

- 4.6.1 WMFS recognises that to enable effective individual and organisational development and progression, it is vital that there is consistency in the methodology, approach, and opportunity for all staff. This is particularly key when staff develop into supervisory, middle, and senior leadership roles.
- 4.6.2 To support this approach, a career development pathway is being developed for foundation, supervisory, middle, and senior levels to support individuals to be competent in their role and to enable them to progress through the service.
- 4.6.3 The career development pathway incorporates the development of the talent pool approach highlighted in Section 3.1.

4.7 **Member-Led Stakeholder Sessions**

A range of member-led and stakeholder sessions will be developed and delivered throughout July, August and September, dates to be agreed with Members. These sessions will gather further evidence and feedback to support the development of the report to the Scrutiny Committee in October 2023.

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. No initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this report as one is not required. The review itself will specifically consider the impact and experience of training and development for staff and new joiners with protected characteristics. Therefore, it is expected that the final review will report and assess the equality impacts.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There are no legal implications from this report, although it is expected that the report will consider the service's legal obligations with regards to skills, training, and inclusion.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are no direct financial implications of this proposal – the review will be undertaken by WMFS staff and WMFRA Members.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no environmental impacts of this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers.

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