

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2014

1. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY QUARTERLY UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee considers the current position of the Service in meeting the requirements for the Excellence level of the FRS Equality and Diversity (E&D) Framework and in view of this work, reviews the West Midlands Fire Service published Equality Objectives.
- 1.2 THAT the Committee note the completion of the work agreed at the 21 October 2013 Scrutiny meeting attached as Appendix A.
- 1.3 THAT the Committee now approve the key recommendations for action moving forward to support the Service in achieving Excellence within the FRS Equality and Diversity Framework Appendix B.
- 1.4 THAT the Committee considers the Equality Workforce Monitoring data that the Service is required to publish by 31 January 2014, in response to the regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011, under the Specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 attached as Appendix C.
- 1.5 THAT the Committee considers the content of this report that provides an overview of our current progress against the existing WMFS Equality Objectives attached as Appendix D.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 At the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 October 2013, the Committee agreed to an Equality and Diversity work review that would include a gap analysis against the Excellence level of the FRS Equality Framework and its Equality Objectives. A timeframe was agreed to provide an early assessment against the key themes of the FRS Equality Framework and this work has been completed.

- 2.2 The report makes recommendations of actions that will align the Equality and Diversity work to the Plan whilst responding to the current gaps identified against the Excellence level of the FRS Equality Framework. The report also outlines the timeframes required to work towards excellence through a phased approach as agreed by Corporate Board after consultation with the Strategic Advisory Group. This proposal also outlines the appropriate stage of the process to review the Equality Objectives.
- 2.3 The report provides the Equality Workforce Monitoring Data as at 1 November 2013 attached as Appendix C, as required to be published annually under the Specific duties of the Equality Act.
- 2.4 The report concludes with an overview of the Service's current progress with regard to the published WMFS Equality Objectives 2012-2015.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 West Midlands Fire Service had undertaken a Local Government Association (LGA) peer review in 2009 and was awarded the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Standard. Since then the LGA has revised the Equality Framework on a number of occasions to reflect the changes to the Equality Act and to be more reflective of the Fire and Rescue Service sector.
- 3.2 Overall the revised FRS Equality and Diversity Framework has shifted emphasis to become more outcome focused around the needs of local communities. The key themes of the Excellence FRS Equality Framework 2012, as agreed by the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association are:
- knowing your communities.
 - leadership, partnership and service commitment.
 - community engagement and satisfaction.
 - responsive services.
 - a skilled and committed workforce.
- 3.3 The Equality Framework uses a simple scoring method to support Services to prepare for their 3 day Excellence Peer Assessment by first submitting a self assessment report. The key scoring levels for which are:

- i. Not in place: 1
 - ii. Currently being established: 2
 - iii. In place but needs improving: 3
 - iv. In place and effective: 4
- 3.4 In order to achieve the Excellence status the Service needs to aim for “in place and effective” against the criteria detailed under each of the key themes.
- 3.5 The Equality and Diversity Manager working with various directorates and key internal stakeholders has undertaken a desk top gap analysis so that we agree through professional judgement where we are currently with regard to our performance as attached in Appendix E.
- 3.6 In summary, our areas of strength include ‘Knowing your Communities and our ‘Leadership and Partnership’ work that scored 3. The areas of development that scored 2 include: Community Engagement and Satisfaction; Responsive Services and Employment and Training.
- 3.7 The Service is good at collating, analysing data and understanding risk to different groups of people and communities. Our partnership work has quickly established with wider than just blue light services such as with local authorities, NHS and third sector organisations to provide better services.
- 3.8 In areas where we have scored two, it is recognised that this is an initial assessment that was confined by limited information provided within tight timescales. Managers have the challenge to unpick how they are considering the needs of different communities or employee groups and furthermore identify what equality outcomes have been achieved.
- 3.9 Consistency and transparency of applying policies and establishing ways of working is another area where improvements can be made. A benefit of the review process is that it will enable the Service to detect inconsistencies and improve processes and outcomes. In fact, during the process of establishing the performance against the Framework, the Prevention team has established a ‘Marmot Model’. The review highlighted the synergy between equality outcomes and those driven through our prevention work such as ‘Making Every Contact count and the Marmot Review’.

This model embeds Equality & Diversity (E&D) considerations into our prevention work so that it can be implemented across the workforce as a transparent way of delivering equality and excellent Service delivery and prevention work.

- 3.10 The Service is confident that the current scoring position can improve, particularly scores from 2 to 3. It is the journey from 3 to 4 scores that will require a more focused effort.
- 3.11 In order to be successful in our Equality Excellence Peer Assessment the Service has outlined a phased approach to work through the key themes of the Excellence Framework as detailed in Appendix B.
- 3.12 The next phase of our work will include further scrutiny of the gap analysis and a joined up approach across the various directorates in order to establish our evidence and self assessment with an aim to improve our current scoring. It is intended that we address gaps and improve our ways of working continuously throughout the phased approaches to establish improved performance against the Framework.
- 3.13 The remaining part of the report below highlights our current progress against our Equality Objectives.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- 3.14 The transition of the E&D team's temporary move to Operations has had a very positive first six months providing the opportunity to influence changes through projects as well as through establishing relationships. The E&D Manager now supports the Area Commanders as well as being a member of the Operations Commanders' Team. This is enabling our leaders within the Service to further develop a sophisticated understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion issues in managing their people and delivering services to the community. A specific Operations Commander Continuous Professional Development (CPD) event is planned in January 2014.

LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION

- 3.15 The Chief Fire Officer, Phil Loach, received a national award in the category for 'Leadership in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' at the Personal Fair and Diverse Awards event hosted by Greater Manchester FRS and the Asian Fire Service Association on 31 October 2013.

The personal commitment of the Chief Fire Officer and his ability to enable and empower others to deliver equality outcomes was sighted as one of the reasons for him winning the Award.

- 3.16 Authority Members alongside Corporate Board members continue to provide their personal support and leadership to E&D initiatives to increase the profile of work internally and externally. For example, members of the Scrutiny Panel, the Chairman and Principal Officers supported a number of projects detailed within the report which included the Asian Fire Service Association national conference where they showcased the work of WMFS on a national platform; the Reaching for the Stars Evaluation day and the Asian Women's engagement day.
- 3.17 The success of Enabling Leadership event in September 2013, has led to this becoming an ongoing campaign that supports inclusion and engagement with the workforce to improve our capability and ways of working. The event itself was aiming to empower employees to engage with the vision of the organisation and to provide a space to network, engage with others, share experiences and provide feedback. The event focused on three key areas: Individual, organisational and community.
- 3.18 Following on from the event Operations has continued to engage with employees to gain their feedback. The feedback from the event established the following key themes where employees felt improvements can lead to more productivity and performance.
- i. *Communications:* internal communications to be less vertical and adapting a more matrix approach. Externally to improve the understanding of our public with regard to our portfolio of services and the public value we give through our services.

- ii. *Equality, diversity and Inclusion - support and empowering:* the approach of enabling different levels of the organisation to connect and gain a sense of ownership, involvement and inspiration from one another was seen as key to productivity and future success of the Service. Individuals were keen to contribute to the delivery of the Plan in different ways to utilise their talents to make a positive difference from all levels, however they felt that they needed support to access different opportunities to do so.
 - iii. *Leadership and development:* there was much feedback for the need for more transparency and consistency in applying people management processes and enabling people to gain opportunities for their own development. As a direct result of the day, one of the outcomes has been that ACO Gary Taylor invited the two people who provided feedback with regard to perceptions of the progression processes to shadow the Group Commander promotion process. The two individuals did undertake the shadowing and were supported by Area Commanders and the Recruitment team with this. We are now establishing the outcomes of their experiences so that any learning points can be shared and considered.
 - iv. *Communities:* it was recognised that there could be better involvement and engagement with communities in delivering our services and we need to raise the profile of the work that we do within our communities with all our people internally and externally.
- 3.19 To move the campaign forward a newsletter will be published to communicate the feedback to the wider workforce and to establish some areas of actions to respond to the issues raised. Similar themes at future events to the one in September will be held to enable communications, engagement and impact.
- 3.20 The Leadership Excellence Course and Wolverhampton University fire and rescue degree courses continue to be delivered successfully to support our leadership development.

PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND RESPONSE

- 3.21 The recruitment of Partnership Officers and Community Risk Reduction Officers has now been completed and they have been undertaking specifically tailored induction and team development training which has included sharing the vision for our prevention and protection work. It has included developing their understanding of the Marmot principles, Making Every Contact Count and the use of the Marmot model.
- 3.22 As part of our efforts to increase our community engagement and social inclusion in shaping services, WMFS held its first Asian Women's Engagement event on 3 December 2013. This was attended by professional and community women from all Southern Asian backgrounds and by other people who work with agencies that deliver services to this community group. The purpose of the event was to seek feedback on shaping services such as prevention and positive action in recruitment alongside raising their awareness of the range of work of the Service. Cllr Waseem Zaffar who is on the Inclusion Panel for Birmingham City Council personally supported the event alongside the Chairman of the Authority and Cllr Keith Chambers. The outcomes of the event has included identifying key Ambassadors from the Community who the Service can engage and consult with and also their contribution for the forthcoming International Women's Day event.
- 3.23 The event attracted a great deal of media attention which included the BBC WM as well as a range of ethnic minority press including a Satellite TV channel 'Akaal TV' that covered the event to be broadcasted. The Service intends to build on these relations to reach out to different community groups.
- 3.24 To further focus our engagement and consultation with local communities the CFS team, Equality Officers and Marketing team are supporting the Service to carry out local risk mapping to determine how we engage with our diverse communities and to seek ways of improving relations. A report to this effect was presented to the Scrutiny Panel and the recommendations of which will be implemented in Q1 of 2014.
- 3.25 The Community Fire Safety (CFS) team continue to support the range of targeted projects as detailed in the last report:

- *Welcome to the West Midlands*
- *Special Education Need (SEN) Educators*
- *The Safestart programme at Safeside*
- *YOYO (You're on Your Own) programme at Safeside*
- The West Midlands Fire Service Arson Task force one project.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- 3.26 With the opportunity during October and November to undertake further Firefighter Recruitment Activity, we have continued with our approach of proactive Positive Action initiatives. Having welcomed a new Positive action co-ordinator from our Operational team, our focus has been on a new group of applicants entering our Phase 2 of our recruitment process and those that were unsuccessful during the June to August campaign.
- 3.27 Of the group of applicants entering phase 2 of our recruitment campaign, twenty five (10%) of the applicants are female and twenty nine (12%) are Black or Minority Ethnic (four of the females are BME). The average age is 26.3 years, ages range from 17 to 49 and three of the applicants are disabled.
- 3.28 We found that a number of our BME and female applicants who originally entered the online application process and who were successful at that stage, did not attend or decided to withdraw from the written stage of the selection process. We have contacted all those who did not attend to find out the reasons why and to see how we can support them in re-entering phase 2 of our recruitment campaign.
- 3.29 We have also contacted all female and BME applicants who were unsuccessful at various stages of the recruitment process. The majority of our female applicants were most likely to be unsuccessful at the physical test stage, mainly due to lower levels of upper body strength. We have invited all female applicants who were unsuccessful or did not attend at this stage to attend Physical Training sessions, specifically designed to offer advice and support on a range of techniques designed to improve levels of upper body strength.

- 3.30 We have also had the opportunity to facilitate workshops focussed on our behavioural framework to support BME and female applicants in maximising their ability to demonstrate their own personal qualities and attributes both in writing and through the interview process.
- 3.31 Moving forward our focus will be on a long term campaign of Positive Action. We have built a close working relationship with West Midlands Police and Birmingham City Council and are currently working a co-ordinated approach with a range of joint initiatives being planned for 2014 focussed on schools and our local communities.
- 3.32 WMFS are beginning to implement the longer term recruitment strategies to attract more diverse employees to the Service by contact with girls and other under represented groups through educational programmes.
- 3.33 The Service is continuing with its range of employee engagement initiatives, particularly targeting under representative groups. These include:
- 'We are Women @ West Midlands Fire Service',
 - The regional Asian Fire Service Association
- 3.34 The Personal Effectiveness Course 'Reaching for the Stars' undertook a delegates' feedback and evaluation event that would also seek views on whether the group wanted to establish their own forum. The event provided positive reviews of the work and impact it has made with employees in not only supporting them in their personal and professional development but also enabling them to want to be more engaged and contribute to similar projects. The Service intends to continue to deliver the course and set up an employee forum for these employees. The feedback for areas of development is being considered and the course will be implemented again in February 2014.
- 3.35 Based on a coaching model, the Buddy scheme was set up to enable delegates to channel their energy back into the organisation through exploring ways of contributing. The buddies enabled delegates to understand how to network outside of their teams and also to signpost them to different opportunities to sustain engagement.

- 3.36 The Buddying scheme continues to grow and buddies are not only supporting the personal effectiveness course but are also being assigned to the new recruits. As the interest in this project grows, we will support further development and delivery of the scheme in 2014.
- 3.37 The E&D team continue to provide managers with coaching and support alongside technical advice on E&D issues; these include technical advice and support at tribunals as well as equality impact assessments, advice on the development of the recruitment campaigns and progression model.

EVALUATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

- 3.38 All Commands supported the work towards achieving Marmot status. Jean Arrowsmith, an independent specialist delivering this work, has visited all commands and compiled the draft Marmot submission Brochure. The Service is now preparing the launch of this achievement as it is the first Fire and Rescue Service to be recognised by the Marmot Team as achieving this status.
- 3.39 Closer working with partner agencies such as Safeguarding Boards, Adult Social Care and Housing providers, is enabling West Midlands Fire Service to track vulnerable people as they move. Many partners are now willing to share data with us to assist in tracking vulnerable individuals. However the Data Protection Act is still proving to be a barrier from some organisations.
- 3.40 The Service is now sharing campaign information with the social housing group so that Fire Kills Campaigns are communicated to tenants through their web sites and newsletters.
- 3.41 The use of Facebook and Twitter to support community safety campaigns has now been established. This work is co-ordinated between HQ Community Safety and Corporate Media.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report and Equality Objectives within it respond directly to the General and Specific duties of the Equality Act and considers the Equality and Diversity issues that are pertinent to the needs of the Service.

In doing so a range of equality data has been analysed and considered with regard to all the protected characteristics.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report responds to our requirements under the Equality Act 2010; Public Sector Equality Duties 2011. The Equality Objectives 2012 – 2015 further advance our compliance with the General Duty and Specific Duties. The Objectives also support the organisation with better response to employment and service delivery legislative requirements.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of producing the Equality and Diversity report and objectives for 2012-2015 would be accommodated within the existing budget provision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Quick Start Guide: Public Sector Equality Duty

Quick Start Guide: Specific duties

Meeting the Equality Duty in policy and decision-making

Engagement and the Equality Duty

The contact name for this report is Preith Shergill, 0121 380 6914.

PHIL LOACH

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A

Annual Reporting and Review of Equality and Diversity Objectives – Work Programme

Actions required	D/L
<p>Scrutiny Committee – Equality & Diversity Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Current progress against Equality Objectives. • Inform members of the changes to the FRS Equality Framework. • Proposals for a work programme including review of Equality Objectives and working towards Excellence. • Proposal to presenting findings of the review and reporting back in January meeting. 	<p>Sandwell: 5 Sept Meeting 16 Sept 12.30n</p>
<p>WMFS Equality and Diversity Desktop gap analysis of performance against the NEW FRS Equality and Diversity Framework – Excellence level.</p>	<p>Raise at SAG 16 October.</p> <p>Present outcomes at Quarterly E&D Update to CB 19 November 2013</p>
<p>Report against existing Objectives at Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Inform them of progress with regard to the work programme towards new framework.</p>	<p>Internal deadline for Scrutiny report 9 October 2013.</p> <p>4 November 2013 – E&D progress report to Scrutiny Report</p>
<p>Undertake Review of Equality Objectives against new Equality Framework and excellence level and the delivery of E&D within WMFS, considering the outcomes of the gap analysis.</p>	

Prepare data for annual Publishing as required by the Equality Act 2010.	
Completion of Review and Annual reporting for specific duties – update to Corporate Board Opportunity to consider whether the Service would like to go for Excellence. Submit report to Scrutiny.	Corporate Board meeting 17 December 2013. Internal deadline for January meeting: 17 December 2013
Equality and Diversity update to Scrutiny Panel	Scrutiny meeting – 20 January meeting
Migration from old framework to new and implementation of outcomes from the Review.	Programme of work to be confirmed

APPENDIX B

Delivering Excellence in Equality and Diversity - Project Plan		
Phase 1	Mapping of the organisations position with regard to achieving Excellence of the FRS Equality & Diversity Excellence Framework. Through Professional Judgement & Evidence referencing.	D/L 3 January Scrutiny Report. Scrutiny presentation 20 January 2014
Phase 2:	Further scrutiny and gap analysis. Develop an action plan for stakeholders Review Equality Objectives	Q4, March 2014 Q1, June 2014 Q1, June 2014
Phase 3	Set up stakeholder/ delivery team Strategic work streams to meet Equality outcomes/ objectives and close the gaps	Q1, June 2014 Q2 – Q3 2014
Phase 4	Review position with regard to going for excellence and approach	Q3 Dec 2014
Phase 5	Self Assessment Report (Q4 Jan – March 2014)	Q4 March 2015
Phase 6	Preparing for the Peer Assessment. (Q1 April 2015)	Q1 May 2015

APPENDIX C

WORKFORCE DATA

Please see separate PDF document

APPENDIX D

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES 2012 - 2015

ACCOUNTABILITY

The journey towards achieving excellence requires us to challenge ourselves and continuously improve. We recognise that inclusion strategies will form a key dimension to the Equality and Diversity agenda as we move forward. Some of our key specific and measurable Equality Objectives that promote accountability at all levels of the Service includes:

1. Our *Strategic direction and drive* will continue to be given through our Authority and Corporate Board members. They will also monitor progress and provide scrutiny on our Equality and Diversity performance *through equality analysis* such as through quarterly reports and equality impact assessments. We shall continue to have an Equality and Diversity lead member on the Authority who will champion E&D issues at a strategic level.
2. Managers will lead in *identifying and embedding* Equality and Diversity actions into their local directorate/section plans and all employees will identify and promote relevant E&D principals and actions within their work accordingly.

LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION

Attributes of leadership can be displayed at all levels; each and every person within the service is encouraged to promote Equality and Diversity which is reflected in our commitment to our core values in all that we do.

1. Authority and Corporate Board members will continue to demonstrate their commitment to Equality and Diversity through leadership actions and personal impact.
2. The Authority continues to profile and provide the support and resources required to deliver equality and diversity improvements.

SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENGAGEMENT

The service is committed to using the appropriate and varied prevention, protection and response activities to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

Appendix E

Phase 1 Scoring for Strategic E&D Themes of the Framework as at December 2013

Strategic Stream	Scoring based on submissions
1. Knowing your communities.	3
2. Leadership, partnership and service commitment.	3
3. Community engagement and satisfaction.	2
4. Responsive services.	2
5. A skilled and committed workforce.	2

Prevention and Protection Activities

1. Our local plans demonstrate the sophisticated way in which we use our intelligence data and risk mapping within the context of understanding the changing nature of who our communities are and the environment that they live in. We use this information to achieve better outcomes in our prevention, protection and response work. We will publish our local plans to communicate with residents and demonstrate our commitment to and understanding of the needs of our communities and set our accountability towards continuous improvement. In particular, by identifying 20% of the most 'at risk groups' with regard to home fires, road safety, personal safety and community safety and target our resources to make these communities safer.
2. We will continue to raise the awareness of our communities towards managing safety through a range of interventions and educational activities that promote community cohesion; such as through publicity, open days, schools visits, youth work, Safeside and local station level activities.

Response

1. We will be well prepared at all times and respond to all emergency response situations with the highest level of expertise, skills and abilities to reduce the risk of fires, road traffic incidents, injury and death.
2. We will ensure that our enforcement activities do not disproportionately impact any specific communities without reasonable justification. Where possible, where trends are identified we will make efforts to advise and provide guidance so that these communities be more proactive in responding to the requirements of the law.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

1. We will ensure that we tackle any barriers to communication Development, inclusion and progression.
2. We will ensure that all of our employees are treated with dignity and respect at all levels regardless of their differences.

3. We will promote positive action initiatives to specifically engage employees from under representative groups to engage with organisational development as well as their own development.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Monitoring, evaluation, sharing good practice and ensuring the best use of resources are the key to our aspiration of achieving and sustaining excellence in equality and diversity for our employees and our communities.

1. We will assess the effectiveness of our partnership work in achieving equality outcomes.

Reaching for the Stars

APPENDIX E

Please see separate PDF document