

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2014

1. **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT
PROCESSES USED AT WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT Scrutiny Committee notes the progress made with regard to the scrutiny review of firefighter recruitment.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to update Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the scrutiny working group and future agreed actions.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee state that it will carry out a minimum of two scrutiny reviews per annum selected by the Committee. The Committee have selected to review the recruitment exercise recently carried out by the Service and a Working Group has been identified.
- 3.2 Members of the Scrutiny Working Group have received a report detailing the recent recruitment activity and the selection processes carried out. A presentation was also delivered to Members at their first Working Group meeting held on 25th November 2013. Members commented on the robust nature of the recruitment exercise and the thoroughness of the selection processes and the analysis undertaken.

- 3.3 In early 2013 the Fire Authority took the decision to recommend an increase in council tax to provide additional funding to support our frontline services. This enabled Firefighter recruitment activity to commence in June 2013.
- 3.4 The removal of the mandatory nature of the National Firefighter Selection process provided us with the opportunity to tailor our recruitment and selection processes to meet our specific requirements whilst maintaining a robust, legally defensible approach. We are now in a position where we can target our selection process to identify the higher performers to meet the changing needs of the modern day Fire and Rescue Service.
- 3.5 Our recruitment strategy is based upon a sequential system, i.e. candidates will be rejected on the results of each selection stage. This has not only an economic advantage when the number of candidates is large, but also allows us to select the higher performers from each stage.
- 3.6 A programme of positive action activity commenced in May 2013. This focused on short term initiatives aimed at those currently in the employment market. Focus was given to increasing numbers of female applicants and applicants from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 3.7 The selection methods used included an online selection process, psychometric assessment, practical selection tests and interview. The selection process has provided WMFS with candidates with the right skills and attributes both psychologically and physically to be trained to be high performing firefighters.
- 3.8 55 new entrants have been identified following the recruitment exercise. Staffing figures indicate up to a further 46 new entrants will be required between July 2014 and October 2014. Whilst considering the options available, Members agreed that we consider the next group of high performers from the online process. In addition, those applicants who were unsuccessful at later stages during the first phase will be invited to re-enter the process at the written test stage.

It is recognised that the first cohort of applicants performed higher at the online stage and for this reason should be given the same opportunity to compete again with the second cohort.

- 3.9 The Scrutiny Working Group will further consider the detailed analysis provided in the report and will now commence the process of interviewing those who participated in the recruitment exercises. This includes both assessors and candidates. Members will also interview key decision makers including the Area Commander, Operations responsible for People and Performance as well as Human Resources staff members. In addition, Members will observe the selection tests that are being carried out as part of the second phase of recruitment. This will be facilitated by the HR Manager, Resourcing.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required and has not been completed as the matter outlined in the report does not relate to a policy change. This will however form part of any review undertaken by the Working Group.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

To ensure that the principles of equality and diversity and relevant employment legislation are adhered to throughout the recruitment and selection process, HR policies and practices in relation to recruitment should be reviewed carefully to highlight any barriers and to identify any opportunities for improvement.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Scrutiny Working Group, 25th November 2013 – 'Review of Firefighter Recruitment 2013 Campaign'

The contact name for this report is_Joanne Simmonds, HR Manager, Resourcing, 0121 380 6200

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER