

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 NOVEMBER 2018

1. SCRUTINY OF POSITIVE ACTION AND FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

That Scrutiny Committee note the progress made in relation to the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment and conclude the review.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Scrutiny Committee on the improvements made to our positive action and firefighter recruitment activity and to conclude the review.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee has undertaken to review and evaluate our approach to positive action and firefighter recruitment. The scope for the review was to consider our practices in relation to both positive action and recruitment and selection, and make recommendations for improvement.
- 3.2 Our workforce planning assumptions indicate that we need to recruit 481 new entrant firefighters between 2019 to 2024 to maintain our current staffing requirements. The diagram at Appendix 1 shows the impact of this when compared to the current establishment figure.
- 3.3 In support of our vision in having a workforce that is reflective of the working population we have set ourselves the following ambitions:

2017/2018	20% of new starters will be women 35% of new starters will be BME
2018/2019	40% of new starters will be women 35% of new starters will be BME
2019/2020	50% of new starters will be women 35% of new starters will be BME
2020/2021 onwards	60% of new starters will be women 35% of new starters will be BME

4. **OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW**

- 4.1 WMFS approach to the recruitment of firefighters has moved from campaign based to an approach that is continual and sustained. This means that our positive action now drives our recruitment activity.
- 4.2 WMFS approach to positive action begins during the attraction phase and, in partnership with the Fire Service College, we have developed a sophisticated approach to marketing using social media as a tool to attract a more diverse range of applicants. Advertisements via Facebook are targeted based upon ethnicity, gender and interest. Advertisements are dynamic with wording and imagery changing over time based upon analytical data and monitoring the success of a particular advertisement.
- 4.3 WMFS have developed and implemented a suite of pre-recruitment activities that are available to prospective and current candidates aimed at removing some of the traditional barriers experienced by underrepresented groups. These include a pre-recruitment development programme which offers an alternative route via a bespoke programme where assessments are delivered in a modular way throughout the course. We also have pre-recruitment 'light' activities targeted at those underrepresented groups in preparation for assessment. These include fitness sessions, interview skills input, confidence building and team work activities. We also continue to run the more traditional 'taster day' sessions for prospective applicants. These are coordinated via local station based personnel.
- 4.4 WMFS approach to the assessment of firefighters has evolved. The newly developed assessment day focuses on

the measurement of behaviours, attitude and the candidate's ability to interact with a diverse group of people.

The first part of the assessment day includes a behavioural based interview, role play exercise and group discussion. The second part of the day focuses on the practical elements of the role, ensuring candidates have sufficient practical ability to handle fire service equipment. Candidates are assessed to ensure they can work at heights, have good manual dexterity, as well as the ability to combine upper and lower body strength and co-ordination.

The assessment process has been streamlined and a new digital system introduced enabling a change to previous out-dated paper-based systems.

4.5 The external review commissioned by Scrutiny Committee in November 2017 included highlights and themes from stakeholder interviews, made suggestions for enhancements to positive action and updates to policy and process. The outcomes of this review have been considered and implemented into WMFS current practice.

4.6 For the financial year 2018/2019 our firefighter recruitment targets are:

- 40% of new starters will be women
- 35% of new starters will be BAME

Since April 2018 WMFS have employed 54 new entrant firefighters, 25 (46%) women and 15 (28%) BAME.

When comparing results to previous recruitment activity, WMFS has seen significant success.

The recruitment campaign held in 2016 saw 48 successful candidates. Of these, 4 (8%) were women and 9 (20%) BAME.

4.7 The development of WMFS new approach to positive action and recruitment has seen a high level of success and we are leading the way in the fire sector. Members of the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) team are actively

engaging with a number of FRSs to share our approach and best practice with regard to attraction and selection activities.

- 4.8 WMFS will continue to monitor, review and evaluate the success of positive action and firefighter recruitment through analysis of candidate demographics, attraction rates and candidate success.

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The activities outlined in this report required detailed analysis of a range of equality data including all the protected characteristics.

6. **RISK IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The objectives identified in this report support the organisation in mitigating its risk with regard to claims of unlawful discrimination.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations outlined in this report assists us to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 particularly to advance equal opportunities and eliminate behaviours that are unlawful under the Act.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funds to support this work have been identified through the Scrutiny work programme.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scrutiny Review Scoping Document – Scrutiny of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment
- Scrutiny Committee Report of 12 June 2017
- Scrutiny Committee Report of 4 September 2017
- Scrutiny Committee Report of 13 November 2017
- Scrutiny Committee Report of 4th June 2018

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PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX 1

