

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 NOVEMBER 2015

1. **DIVERSITY INCLUSION COHESION EQUALITY (DICE)
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2012-
2015/OBJECTIVES 2016-2019**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Scrutiny Committee approve the DICE report and objectives 2016-2019 for publication. (See appendix 1).

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Scrutiny Committee of the contents of the DICE report and objectives, this includes reporting on WMFS performance between the period 2012-2015 (including quarter 1 and 2 of 2015) and the Objectives for 2016-2019.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The publishing of the report and objectives is a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties), Regulations 2011 (the specific duties) must:-

- Prepare and publish one or more objectives they think they should achieve in relation to the aims of the General Equality Duty by 6 April 2012 and at least every four years thereafter.
- Ensure that those objectives are specific and measurable.
- Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public.

- 3.2 The previous report (Equality and Diversity Report 2012-2015) was the first WMFS report under this requirement. This document reports on the progress on the Objectives set in the 2012-2015 report and sets new Objectives for 2016-2019 in line with the Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Sector to help facilitate WMFS's journey towards 'Excellence'. Objectives were therefore set under the headings of:-

- Effective Service Delivery & Community Engagement
- Leadership & Inclusion
- Accountability
- Employment & Training
- Sharing Best Practice.

It is progress against these objectives that the first part of the document reports upon.

4. **PROGRESS AGAINST EQUALITY OBJECTIVES FROM 2012-2015**

- 4.1 WMFS's commitment to DICE has over the last 4 years strengthened; this was demonstrated through activity and examples across its functions and Command areas which illustrate the organisation's progress against previous objectives. The report uses a sample of case studies from across WMFS's Command areas to illustrate the range and breadth of activity. Below are examples of some of this work:-

4.2 **Effective Service Delivery & Community Engagement**

Examples within this section of the report show the range of work across WMFS command and demonstrate how the Fire Sector sees fire as a health asset. The report illustrates how, as an organisation, WMFS contributes to not just keeping our communities safe but that by helping to address health inequalities we improve lives to save lives. This growing role in addressing health inequalities has been recognised by WMFS acquiring Marmot Partnership status. Examples also include activities which are Brigade wide such as the work of the Education and Youth Teams, the Road Causality Reduction team, the specialist Deaf Team and the work of the Vulnerable People Officers whose introduction clearly illustrates the evolution of the Service towards a much greater impact on health inequalities and those most vulnerable within society.

4.3 Sharing Best Practice

Examples illustrate how the organisation takes a multi-agency approach and shares its best practice with other organisations, in particular working with the Police on youth engagement activities with groups that would be reluctant to engage with only the Police.

4.4 Leadership and Inclusion

4.4.1 The report describes the impact of the move from Corporate Board to the Strategic Enabling Team (SET) and how this demonstrates commitment to Diversity from the very top of the organisation. SET has a greatly increased diversity across the protected characteristics allowing the Chief Officer to draw on a greater range of expertise and backgrounds in helping him address the challenges facing the organisation.

4.4.2 Also included within the examples of enabling leadership is the Race Equality Forum, the first of its kind in WMFS which has attracted considerable interest from other organisations looking to engage their own Black Minority Ethnic (BME) workforce. The Race Equality Forum was attended by and supported by members of SET. Nearly 100 BME members of staff attended a clear indication of an increasing level of engagement from WMFS BME employees.

4.4.3 Included in this section is the impact of the women's network group Affinity formerly known as 'We are Woman@WMFS' and how the increased engagement from female employees has clear benefits for the organisation with the introduction of female hygiene packs and in depth research into the experiences of new and expecting mothers in the workforce. Finally the section looks at the impact of the dignity for all project and how this has improved the working environment on station for all employees as WMFS journeys towards a fully inclusive environment.

4.5 Accountability

Here the report details the rationale and impact of moving the former Equality and Diversity team into Service Delivery and how the new direction and broader duties for the team are reflected in the change to the DICE team. This has been evidenced by the much greater impact across the organisation that the team has had through its activities, interventions and employee engagement forums as mentioned above. WMFS has made a clear demonstration of organisational commitment by having the Strategic Enabler for DICE as part of the SET team who is enabled to influence and embed DICE issues at the highest levels of decision making.

4.6 Employment & Training

4.6.1 This section outlines the good progress in the last four years in employment and training whilst fulfilling the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to publish workforce data. This data also includes the community data of our service delivery area to allow easy comparison and benchmarking.

4.6.2 The initiatives led by People Support to support Positive Action are highlighted, such as the 15 Positive Action volunteers and having a dedicated Positive Action officer which have impacted positively on our workforce profile, in particular the maintenance of ethnic profiles during a period of low recruitment and the small increase in female profile among operational staff.

4.6.3 The DICE team have delivered positive action through enabling employees from under-represented groups to have a voice and empowering them to engage within the wider organisation through supporting awareness campaigns. Examples of these innovative and impactful projects include the 'Unusual Suspects Dyslexia Awareness' campaign video featuring 5 members of staff talking openly about the impact of being dyslexic. This project was cited as best practice by the Department of Work and Pensions and featured as part of their "Accessible Britain Campaign". The

project has directly increased the numbers of staff who declared a disability as discussed later. The section also detailed the targeted interventions including the 'Buddy Scheme' and Reaching for the Stars personal development course.

- 4.6.4 The workforce profile is generally positive, especially during a period which has seen austerity measures impact on recruitment and the overall size of the workforce reducing from 2364 to 2080 over this period. Despite this reduction, the percentage of female employees has increased slightly overall and in particular among uniformed staff. The race/ethnic profile of the organisation has been relatively stable during this period. Age profiles show a reduction in percentage of employees under 45 and an increase of 46-55 year olds (currently at 32% of the workforce) which is consistent with an ageing workforce which has little recruitment within an ageing population.
- 4.6.5 In the areas of Disability and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) the trends are positive; awareness campaigns have increased declaration rates among disabled staff and those who have not stated on whether they have a disability have dropped from 26% to 18% with an expectation that upcoming campaigns will reduce this further. Sexual orientation profile indicates an increasingly open culture with the number of staff comfortable to identify themselves as lesbian or gay having doubled from 9 to 18 in the last four years with a smaller increase in staff declaring as Bisexual.

5. **DICE OBJECTIVES 2016-2019**

- 5.1 The report also has a new look to the DICE objectives presented within it. The new objectives are designed to be more engaging to employees and the public. The new objectives follow the guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and provide a set of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time constrained objectives to drive forward WMFS's journey towards 'Excellence' and go beyond compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.2 The objectives are divided into 'Aspirational Objectives' designed to stretch the organisation and drive forward organisational change and 'Core Objectives' which form the bedrock for progress and represent solid deliverable outcomes over the next four years.

6. **METHODOLOGY FOR NEW OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 The new objectives were developed by taking various factors into consideration:-

- To ensure that the Objectives ensure progress against all 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010).
- To further the 'Journey Towards Excellence' by ensuring that all areas in the revised Equality Framework for the Fire and Rescue sector are addressed:-
 - Knowing our Communities
 - Involving our Communities
 - Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment
 - Building a Responsive and Accessible Service
 - Building a Skilled and Committed Workforce.

- 6.2 Consultation with stakeholders within Directorates to ensure that DICE considerations are embedded in plans over the next four years.

7. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Due to the inherent nature of this policy document with its focus on meeting the duties of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Standard for Fire and Rescue Sector an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 require the publishing of the main report by the end of January 2016. The report will provide robust evidence of meeting the Public Sector Specific and General Duties under the Equality Act 2010.

9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of producing the DICE Report 2012-2015 and Objectives 2016-2019 will be accommodated within the existing budget provision

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