

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 JUNE 2015

**1. DIVERSITY INCLUSION COHESION EQUALITY (DICE)
QUARTERLY UPDATE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority notes the progress made around developing awareness through the official launch of the former Equality and Diversity (E&D) team now known as Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) team through a range of engagement events.
- 1.2 THAT consideration is given to the continuing migration of the working arrangements from the old to the new Fire Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Excellence Framework. The changes for which, implemented through the DICE strategy, are constantly being aligned to 'The Plan'.
- 1.3 To consider the content of this report, which provides an overview of our current progress against the existing Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Equality & Diversity Framework.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide a quarterly update to Members of the Scrutiny Committee so that they can review and consider the progress being made to support the Service in advancing DICE, as reflected within our strategic objectives of The Plan and as expected through the statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act (2010).

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In consideration of the austerity measures and budget deficit, the Service continues to align and review its resources and functions to achieve the objectives set out in The Plan and to improve our performance to meet the needs of our communities.
- 3.2 The DICE strategy provides clarity through an integrated approach for the various themes; strategies and policies from across the various departments, to improve our performance against The Plan and in delivering services that meet the needs of our diverse communities.
- 3.3 The DICE Strategy also provides direction on how best to synergise, simplify and provide leadership in the management of these; in an environment where we are financially challenged and need to demonstrate innovation, creativity, agility and value for money. This strategy clearly outlines the key areas of Service Delivery and Service Support that need to demonstrate DICE outcomes for our communities.
- 3.4 In addition, the DICE team have planned a range of awareness activities to develop the understanding of our staff with regard to the shift from previously Equality and Diversity to now include Cohesion and Inclusion. This was delivered through the Policy Planning Forum in March 2015 and Management Briefing in May 2015, which was also live streamed to all stations and was later available as a video link for all employees. The briefing was delivered through a range of the Stakeholders alongside all the DICE team members. This highlights the current shift in focus from the DICE team's work from internal only, to also include external interventions demonstrating our commitment to Inclusion and Cohesion.
- 3.5 The work around building awareness and understanding will continue through the use of the DICE brand and DICE interventions. Over the next six months the DICE team will be reviewing the equality objectives as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act (2010), in preparation for publishing a report in January 2016.

- 3.6 Scrutiny Committee Members have played a pivotal role in supporting the DICE agenda by demonstrating leadership and their contribution through the Scrutiny Committee meetings and attendance at DICE events. The Service continues to seek this support.
- 3.7 As part of our approach to meet the Equality Objectives and the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Service uses the 'Excellence' level of the FRS Equality and Diversity Framework as a performance management tool.
- 3.8 This report provides an overview of progress towards achieving the above. In particular, focusing on previously identified and current emerging issues; alongside approaches being undertaken to address these.

4. **PROGRESS AGAINST THE FRS EQUALITY & DIVERSITY FRAMEWORK:-**

Knowing your Communities

- 4.1 We continue to undertake a risk based analysis of our prevention, protection and response work mapping against vulnerable people with protected characteristics and specific groups within the population of West Midlands that are adversely impacted under specific conditions. In particular, to review trends in evidence where under specific circumstances, certain community groups become more vulnerable to fire, road accidents and other areas of our work. To analyse how effectively we mitigate risk in these areas. For instance, single parents, the elderly and men who live alone and have been out of employment for over 12 months.
- 4.2 In order to do this, the Service has developed and launched a new data analysis software tool called 'Vega Explorer'. This tool is able to map all the interactions of the Service with the community and analyse it afterwards. The work around acquiring Aspire View will also enable the Service to better monitor progress with regards to our service delivery work and to make the work of the Fire Service more relevant and reflective in the needs of our different communities and to involve and engage our communities with The Plan.

Leadership, Partnership and Service commitment

- 4.3 We continue with applying the Marmot Principles by using the Marmot model shared with the Scrutiny Committee that embeds the delivery of the principles and equality and diversity considerations when providing services to our communities. We use the model to build the understanding and capability of our frontline employees in considering the specific needs of different communities in providing interventions. There is a range of development planned specifically to up skill our employees and managers around social inequalities and their relationship with safety that is being undertaken between June 2015 and January 2016 by the prevention teams.
- 4.4 The Director of Service Delivery is currently leading as part of a Health and Wellbeing Committee for CFOA who are looking at the growing collaboration opportunities between the Health Service and Fire Service. West Midlands Fire Service prevention teams and Operations Commanders continue to build links with local Health and Wellbeing Boards, Public Health England and the Royal Society of Public Health to seek opportunities for collaboration.
- 4.5 The Service continues to carry out a large public engagement campaign around showcasing our work to reduce health inequalities through the endorsement of the Marmot Principles and the 'Improving lives to save lives' campaign. The media campaign that includes social media, posters on bus shelters and targeted awareness rising continues. West Midlands Fire Service presented at the National Public Health and Primary Care conference at the National Exhibition Centre in May 2015, further highlighting West Midlands Fire Service role in dealing with health inequalities.

Community Engagement & Satisfaction

- 4.6 We continue to take proactive steps to demonstrate the engagement of the diverse communities of West Midlands in consultation, engagement and participation in shaping The Plan and our Services through the implementation of the Community Members Scheme.

- 4.7 The DICE team together with the Communications continues to progress the Community Members Scheme which is being promoted widely across a variety of media in the West Midlands. It has been promoted at station open days and jobs fairs as well as via social media. Community Members Scheme has been promoted in all station management meetings by attendance from a member of the DICE explaining the importance of the Scheme.
- 4.8 The Community Members information has been cascaded to 35 out of 38 station management meetings so far, Safeside volunteers and Vulnerable Persons Officer meetings.
- 4.9 The Community Members Scheme has 421 applicants as of 15 May 2015. The applicants are for a wide range of areas and ethnicities and are approximately reflective of the communities of West Midlands: White/White British (70%) followed by Asian/Asian British (18%), Black/Black British (6%). The majority of our community has showed interest in receiving information through newsletters and open days.
- 4.10 Furthermore, the Service continues to participate in community engagement activities such as attending Birmingham Pride on 23/24 May 2015 with an appliance and a fire bike taking part in the parade on 23 May 2015 with a new banner for the appliance demonstrating the Services support for the event and messages of have a "Safe Pride". This was also communicated via social media, several members of staff and one stand. Internally will promote positive attitudes and behaviours through the work of the DICE champions visiting sections and watches to raise awareness and by working closely with the recently elected Regional Fire Brigades Union Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual (LGBT), representative who is a serving member of WMFS. Several Buddies and DICE champions are also members of the LGBT community encouraging insight into these issues in their role and reflecting the increased engagement by LGBT staff in DICE initiatives.

4.11 The Service considers that one way to understand the different communities is using the knowledge of the workforce that belongs to those communities. As a consequence, following the successful launch of the Race Equality Forum the DICE team have continued to build on the engagement and involvement of Black Minority Ethnic (BME), with smaller focused Race Equality forum task and finish groups exploring the specific issues raised by BME staff at the initial event:-

- development and progression;
- enabling and contributing;
- support through line managers;
- involving and engaging communities.

4.12 To consider that the DICE team is working with other Service teams through the Race Equality Forum task and finish groups to provide the understanding around the range of different Black and Ethnic Minority communities living within the West Midlands so that this understanding is translated into work streams through a co-ordinated and consistent approach.

Responsive and Accessible Services

4.13 We continue to develop and improve our stakeholder engagement tool “Community Members” with internal and external stakeholders that provides support in monitoring progress, shaping and supporting the delivery of the DICE strategy and progress against the FRS E&D Framework. For the Service to proactively engage with our communities to drive the DICE agenda forward.

4.14 The Service’s Women’s group ‘Affinity’ is reviewing the management of maternity issues and will be sharing a report in due course with their findings, which includes comparative data with other FRS and other public services. An updated Maternity, Paternity and Adoption policy has been completed following consultation and will be released in June 2015.

A skilled and committed workforce

- 4.15 Indications are that there are plans to continue to reduce public spending, and we are now preparing for a reduction in our government grant that exceeds the current forecasts of £14 million between 2016 and 2019. With this in mind, we are reviewing the way we staff our Fire Stations and the number of people that we employ in Firefighter roles, to explore alternative ways of working and to protect existing Firefighter jobs. This means that we are not currently in a position to increase Firefighter numbers further. The recruitment campaign which commenced in December 2014 has now been suspended and all candidates have been placed on hold. We have 80 people who have completed some/all elements of the process and we will maintain contact with them over the coming months. We continue to implement our longer term positive action initiatives which include our work experience programme, graduate placements and apprenticeships.
- 4.16 The Resourcing Manager and DICE Manager are currently working together to review the approach towards 'positive action' through developing further a 'Positive Action Strategy'. This strategy will look at the representation of female and minority communities within our workforce but will also seek to address actions around any future recruitment and progression based on our workforce planning.
- 4.17 The percentage of employees with a disability has deteriorated (2.99% in 2015 against 3.01% in 2014) and has not met the target (5.1%). The breakdown of this is:-
- for uniformed employees 2.09% in 2015, against 2.12% in 2014;
 - for Fire Control 5.7% in 2015 against 5.74% in 2014;
 - and for non-uniformed employees 5.7% in 2015 against 5.74% in 2014.
- 4.18 The DICE team is proactively providing awareness information and encouraging the workforce to disclose their status. In order, to do this the DICE team is developing a video resource raising awareness of a wide range of disabilities throughout WMFS. It has begun with an expected launch in the 3rd quarter of 2015.

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This will form part of a disability awareness campaign which focuses on providing information around how employees with a disability can access support and information to encourage declaration of their status, access reasonable adjustments and support to improve their experience and contribution at work.

- 4.19 Managers continue to be targeted to attend disability awareness and reasonable adjustments workshops. The majority of the Operational Training Instructors attended these workshops in January 2015, to ensure any disability issues with new recruits were identified early and appropriately supported.
- 4.20 The dyslexia awareness video “Unusual Suspects” continues to have a positive impact on disability awareness within the organisation. The video has been short listed for a national Public Sector Communication Award for best internal communication campaign and short listed for a Birmingham Community Inspiration Award.
- 4.21 We will also continue to provide bespoke development sessions around any DICE issue to include disclosure. People Support Services (PSS) will be working with managers to increase disclosure with teams, PSS and the DICE team are developing guidance notes for managers to assist them in having the conversation with their teams to encourage disclosure.
- 4.22 The issue of disclosure will also be a key priority of the DICE Champions when they become active and to start delivering awareness sessions in watches and teams in July 2015. They will also be providing support regarding positive action and behaviours.
- 4.23 The percentage of operational workforce that is female has improved (5.02% against 4.75%) but has not met the target (5.14%). The recent crew commander process has attracted applications from six female firefighters to apply and all six applicants have successfully passed the application stage.
- 4.24 The group Affinity is continuing its work and impact within the organisation and developing its own sustainable structures.

- 4.25 The percentage of workforce from ethnic minority backgrounds has deteriorated (13.59% against 13.63%) and has not met the target (13.67%). This is due to the number of leavers.
- 4.26 The current *Inclusion and Cohesion* positive action work streams that target minority groups include:-
- a. 'Reaching for the Stars' - a personal effectiveness course.
 - b. 'Be Effective' – a professional effectiveness course.
 - c. The Buddy Scheme.
 - d. The development of DICE Champions.
 - e. The Leading Excellence Programme.
- 4.27 Advertising for 'Reaching for the Stars' courses will begin in June 2015, with course places allocated in August 2015 and courses scheduled to start in September 2015 in a variety of locations across WMFS.
- 4.28 A recent phase of recruitment for more buddies has now been completed with nearly 40 members of staff from a wide variety of backgrounds and roles now available as a buddy.
- 4.29 DICE Champion recruitment is progressing with the first batch of approximately 12 DICE champions being recruited and trained by the end of June and first delivery taking place in July 2015.

5. **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.

6. **RISK IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Objectives identified within the report support the organisation in mitigating its risk with regard to claims of unlawful discrimination and unfair dismissal.

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7. **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.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

WMFS 2012, "Equality and Diversity Report and Objectives 2012-2015".

Quick Start Guide: Public Sector Equality Duty.

Quick Start Guide: Specific duties

Scrutiny Authority report on Diversity Inclusion Cohesion Equality (DICE) 2014.

WMFS DICE Statement.

WMFS DICE Strategy as at December 2014.

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