

# **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4 JUNE 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.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee on current activity in developing our approach to positive action and provided detail of the outcomes of recent firefighter recruitment activity.

3. **BACKGROUND**

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.

The approach to recruitment has moved away from campaign based, instead focusing on generating a candidate pool that we will nurture through selection. This will provide us with a sustained approach to positive action that will drive our recruitment activity.

We have maintained our eligibility criteria and continue to use our suite of online psychometric tests that have been developed in partnership with the Fire Service College. Our

behavioural assessments continue to be delivered alongside practical selection at our assessment centres.

### 3.1 **Workforce Planning**

Our workforce planning assumptions indicate that we need to recruit 481 new entrant firefighters between 2018 to 2024. The diagram at Appendix 1 shows the impact of this when compared to the current establishment figure.

### 3.2 **Recruitment Targets**

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

### 3.3 **Positive Action Activity**

#### 3.3.1 **Attraction and Marketing**

Our approach to positive action begins at the attraction phase. In partnership with the Fire Service College we have developed number series of adverts that are propagated using Facebook. This allows us to target groups based on ethnicity, interests and gender. For example, an advert seen by a white female will be different to the one seen by a Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) male. The adverts are dynamic with both wording and imagery changing over time for each individual audience based on what was most effective. An example of this would mean fitness based adverts resonate better amongst black females whereas community based adverts are more effective at attracting Asian women.

The Fire Service College and their partner Thinkology have helped us understand the data gathered from Facebook analytics with detailed weekly reports that have now moved us into a position where we can predict per pound spent how

many people we are likely to attract to our portal and at what rate they will complete an application.

Further refinements have come from understanding better what times of day candidates are responding to the adverts along with their interests and occupations. This means additional tailoring of wording and imagery can be carried out to break down each target group into smaller sub groups to increase conversion efficiency.

### 3.3.2 **Pre- Recruitment**

We have developed a suite of pre-recruitment activities that are available for prospective/current candidates to remove some of the traditional barriers in the recruitment process. This includes a female development programme where assessments are delivered during the course. These assessments whilst materially the same as the direct entry route will be delivered modularly within evening and weekend sessions as opposed to during one assessment day. This is to directly address some of the barriers to recruitment we have previously seen amongst women.

After some pilot initiatives were carried out in 2017, and a similar initiative within the recruitment process in 2018 a survey was completed. This showed that all participants felt they had benefited in terms of their confidence with some specifically citing the support provided as being a direct factor that stopped them withdrawing from the process.

The first female development programme concluded at the end of May and analysis of performance is currently being undertaken. It is on track to deliver an increased success rate when compared to direct entry.

### 3.3.3 **External Scrutiny**

In November 2017, Scrutiny Committee commissioned an external consultancy, Equal Approach to undertake a review of our positive action activity. The report provides external scrutiny of our approach and makes recommendations for further improvement. The review was conducted by reviewing and scrutinising all documents and processes relating to positive action as well as carrying out structured

interviews with the DICE team and wider stakeholders. The outcome of the review includes highlights and themes from the stakeholder interviews, recommendations for enhanced practice regarding positive action initiatives, and suggested updates to policy and process. The recommendations are being considered with a view to the DICE team and stakeholder groups working together to generate an action plan.

The full report from Equal Approach can be found at Appendix 2.

### 3.4 **RESULTS TO DATE**

Since September 2017, the DICE team have processed 3394 firefighter applications with 2714 going on to the online tests. This pool of candidates includes 787 women (24%) & 827 people from BME backgrounds (25%). We have now seen just over 200 candidates at our newly developed firefighter assessment centre. Since January 2018, we have employed 67 new entrant firefighters, 22 (33%) women and 21 (32%) BME. The next training course is due to commence in August 2018 and it is anticipated that WMFS will see a further increase in representation from target groups.

### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The activity outlined in this report will require detailed analysis of a range of equality data including all the protected characteristics.

### 5. **RISK IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

### 6. **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.

## 7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funds to support this work have been identified through the Scrutiny work programme. Early engagement has been had with Equal Approach and costs associated with this work will be identified through their proposal.

## 8. **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

The contact name for this report is Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People, contact number 07973 810813.

PHIL LOACH  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**APPENDIX 1**

