

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2017

1. SCRUTINY OF POSITIVE ACTION AND FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the information provided in this report and presentation which forms the basis of the review;
- 1.2 Agrees the working group and approach to engagement;

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide information to Scrutiny Committee with regard to the first stage of the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee has undertaken to review and evaluate our approach to positive action and firefighter recruitment.
- 3.2 West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) will ensure that effective strategies are embedded to support the achievement of equality outcomes for its diverse communities and workforce. WMFS seeks to ensure that its workforce is representative of the communities it serves.
- 3.3 The review is intended to provide a clear indication of the effectiveness of our positive action approach as well as review our selection practices and processes. This will include an opportunity to review the approach taken by other

organisations as well as consideration of external support to provide a new approach.

- 3.4 Our vision is to be representative of the communities we serve and WMFS will work both internally and externally to consider innovative and modern approaches to the redesign of our services to reduce the barriers and limitations underrepresented groups may face.
- 3.5 Proposed recruitment over the next four years would mean changing 29% of our operational workforce providing a greater opportunity to change the profile of workforce than WMFS have had for many years.
- 3.6 WMFS have implemented ambitious targets for the next four years which would see us looking to recruit 35% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and 60% women of all applicants recruited.
- 3.7 WMFS will move away from campaign based recruitment, instead focusing on generating a candidate pool that we will nurture through selection. This will provide us with a sustained approach to positive action which will drive our recruitment activity.
- 3.8 A programme of positive action activity is currently underway including a pre recruitment course aimed at women applicants, Firefighter Taster sessions that are being held at various locations across the West Midlands, partnership with Job Centre Plus as well as attendance at third party led careers events.
- 3.9 Using a range of approaches, WMFS will gather information and data from our communities in order for us to best understand the potential barriers that our underrepresented groups may face. We will ensure that our candidates are 'tracked' from the point of initial contact through to the conclusion of their application, enabling us to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our positive action activity.
- 3.10 Through effective engagement, both internally and externally, WMFS will explore best practice and critically evaluate our approach. We have already had early

engagement with West Midlands Police regarding our candidate nurturing approach. Equal Approach, a leading inclusive recruiter and diversity consultancy, will act as a 'critical friend' and assist with the evaluation of our activity.

- 3.11 A further update and review will be provided to Scrutiny Committee in 6 months' time.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

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**PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**