

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 FEBRUARY 2017

1. **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF POSITIVE ACTION AND FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee considers and approves the attached scoping document for the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 THAT, subject to 1.1. above, the Committee establishes a working group to take forward the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The Committee is asked to give consideration to the subject of its next scrutiny review and the attached scoping document (Appendix 1), with a view to initiating a review of positive action and firefighter recruitment, and the establishment of a working group.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee state that it will carry out a maximum of two scrutiny reviews per annum. Such reviews will be member-led and evidence based and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 West Midlands Fire Service opened firefighter recruitment in October 2016 and a period of intense positive action activity preceded the recruitment campaign. The Service focused its commitment on increasing levels of diversity amongst its operational workforce. The approach to positive action was developed with the aim of increasing

both women and black and minority ethnic (BME) applicants.

- 3.3 It has therefore been suggested that the Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider the impact of positive action and the effectiveness of the firefighter selection methods focusing on the outcomes achieved.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This report responds directly to the General and Specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 and considers DICE issues that are pertinent to the needs of the Service. In doing so a range of equality data will be analysed and considered with regard to all protected characteristics.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

The recommendations outlined in this report will assist the Service to fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010 particularly to advance equal opportunities and eliminate behaviours that are unlawful under the Act.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, if a decision is taken to use an external provider during the course of the review, any financial costs will be met from within existing budgets.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

The contact name for this report is Gary Taylor (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), telephone number 0121 380 6006.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



Committee – Review Scoping Document

Review Title:	Scrutiny of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment
Date of Review:	2017
Purpose of the Review:	
<p>A Thematic Review to examine and evaluate positive action and firefighter recruitment.</p> <p>WMFS has a key aim of ensuring effective strategies are embedded to support the Service in achieving equality outcomes for its diverse communities and workforce. WMFS seeks to ensure that its workforce is representative of the communities it serves.</p> <p>The Scrutiny 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 for firefighter recruitment. Scrutiny Committee will identify good practice and areas for further development. This will include an opportunity to review the approach taken by other organisations as well as consideration of external support to provide a new / fresh approach.</p>	
Intended Outcomes :	
<p>To Identify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The current approach taken• The methods of selection for firefighters and the rationale for them• The current positive action activities, identifying methods used to target underrepresented groups• Consider the impact of the Adrian Thomas Review• Understand the role of the internal stakeholder groups (Affinity, Inspire, AFSA) in our positive action work• The current demographic profile of applicants from initial expression of interest through to offer of employment• Analyse success rates of applicants and identify any areas of concern• Additional positive action activities to be explored to further increase diversity of applicants	



- Areas of improvement to the selection methods for firefighters including exploration of external support
- Recommendations for improvement
- Consideration of the resources required to deliver positive action and firefighter recruitment over the next 3 years

Lead Member	To be confirmed
Lead Officer/Officer Group (including partners):	Joanne Simmonds, People Support Manager
Links to Strategic Objectives	The Plan – People Priorities ‘The Service will achieve Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality outcomes for its diverse community and workforce’

Reasons for undertaking the review:

Firefighter recruitment opened in October 2016 and a period of intense positive action activity preceded the campaign. We focused our commitment on increasing levels of diversity amongst our operational workforce. Our approach to positive action was developed with the aim of increasing both Women and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) applicants.

New selection methods have been introduced including the online application process which includes numerical and verbal reasoning, risk assessment and Situational Judgement Test. The practical selection process has been reviewed and a new process of ‘amber banding’ introduced with a view to removing some of the traditional barriers we have encountered with the practical elements of the selection process.

The interview process now includes more emphasis on the changing role of the firefighter, in particular ‘safe and well’ and vulnerable people.

Our recruitment processes have been designed to identify candidates who will have the ability to meet the needs of our local communities through prevention and protection work and initiatives, whilst also maintaining the skills and knowledge to react to a diverse range of incidents.



The Scrutiny Review will consider the impact of positive action and the effectiveness of the firefighter selection methods focusing on the outcomes achieved.

Scoping undertaken by:

Joanne Simmonds

Chief Officer and/or

Partner/Agency Equivalent:

Existing data available for consideration:

Background papers will be made available to Scrutiny Committee on all information regarding the positive action activity and firefighter recruitment. This will include:

- Staffing information
- Demographic profile of workforce
- Marketing and publicity materials
- Positive action approach
- Performance Indicators
- Level 3 Plan
- Detail of current selection methods/tools

Review Work Programme:

Task	Method	Lead person(s)	Completion by:

Review Scoping Checklist

Status

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