

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 JUNE 2015

1. **PROGRESS REPORT ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION STRATEGY THROUGH THE COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP SCHEME**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee notes the progress made in the six months since approving the Community Membership model in October 2014.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to provide the Committee with an update on the Service's progress in addressing the recommendations arising out of the Scrutiny Committee review of the Authority's public consultation process.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 At its meeting of 13 October 2014, the Scrutiny Committee approved the proposal to develop the Community Membership Scheme as a method of delivering 16 recommendations to improve public consultation.

3.2 In addressing these recommendations officers of WMFS have developed and launched this model with a desired outcome of creating an up to date database of members reflective of our communities whom we will be able to contact with a view to qualitative (and eventually quantitative) engagement that will:

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- improve quality of consultation with The Plan and The Community Safety Strategy;
- improve the awareness of the portfolio of work that West Midlands Fire Service delivers to our diverse communities;
- increase the public value of how the Fire Service as a public body contributes to local communities; and
- increase the contribution of our diverse communities to shaping The Plan and the Community Safety Strategy and support delivery of our service

4. **OVERVIEW**

An important first step is to raise internal awareness amongst employees. This has been achieved through a number of different channels: The Plan, station visits (x35), management briefings (Corporate Communications and DICE) and brigade 'news items'. Current numbers of members show there are signs for optimism, not least in representing ethnic groups, however whilst internal awareness of the model is considered high it is recognised that there is some work to be done in transferring this awareness into teams actively recruiting members.

5. **EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES**

- 5.1 In order to be as efficient and effective as possible the first 6 months have been spent trialling different engagement methods to determine which method/s are the most successful in producing signed up members that are representative of our communities. A list of these methods can be found at Appendix A.
- 5.2 In line with the Corporate Communications Supporting Strategy WMFS officers have created 2 platforms from which someone can sign up to be a member:
 - a paper leaflet
 - a page on the corporate website
<http://www.wmfs.net/content/community-membership>

6. **CURRENT NUMBERS AND ANALYSIS OF MEMBERS TO DATE**

Current numbers total 421. A breakdown of these numbers between protected characteristics with some analysis can be found in Appendix B.

7. **LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS**

7.1 Significant findings in the first 6 months:

- Age group 25-44 by far outnumber other age groups
- Males slightly outnumber females (c. 53% males)
- Social media can play a key part in attracting members
- Station open days are an excellent opportunity to gain members
- People are more likely to fill out paper forms there-and-then. It is unlikely that people take away the paper form to fill out and send back at a future date
- Current members have shown most interest in wanting to receive newsletters and information about open days.
- The areas with the largest uptake of Community members come from Handsworth Wood, Handsworth and Wolverhampton
- We have individuals from outside of the West Midlands who have signed up to the scheme (Peterborough, Shropshire, Telford, Worcester and Shrewsbury)

7.2 Next steps

- Engage with all stations that are holding open days over the summer period
- Continue to build awareness across all WMFS employees
- Continue with social media (Facebook) advertising (cost per member currently c. 50p p/p)
- Engage and involve elected members in recruitment and awareness

8. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Community member's project will be significant in furthering the Authority's responsibilities and action under the Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010. In particular, the project will advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different communities through the activities that are undertaken.

Ongoing equality analysis is a key part of the Community member's project and there will be ongoing monitoring and review to determine any adverse or positive impact.

9. **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.

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no significant financial implications arising from implementing the recommendations set out in Appendix A that cannot be met from within existing budgets.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scrutiny Committee, Review of Consultation Methods, 8 April 2013 & 13 October 2014

Executive Committee, Recommendations of the Public Consultation Review of the Community Safety Strategy 2013/16, 9 December 2013

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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Appendix A

Overview of key events and breakdown of paper form versus web form December 2014 – May 2015

Please note that majority of analysis is drawn from 300 of current total of 421

Venue/Engagement Opportunity	Web/Form	Number of completed forms
Example of station and corporate events: Carol Service, Valaski Day, Dudley Mosque open day, Public Health Show, Job Fairs,	Web/Paper form	91
Bands – wind and pipe	Paper form	10
Station open days	Paper form	70
WMFS employees	Web	4
Safeside and TCC	Paper form	3
Bands – wind and pipe	Paper form	10
Social Media	Web	61+
WMAS Foundation Trust membership	?	?
Partnership Meetings	Paper form	11
School Visit	Paper form	20
Others	Web/Paper form	20+

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WMFS Community Members Analysis*

1. Total number of community members: 421
2. Age breakdown and numbers
 - 11-16 (25)
 - 17-24 (68)
 - 25-44 (132)
 - 45-64 (45)
 - 65-79 (11)
 - 80+ (5)
 - Not disclosing (14)

Analysis

The largest age brackets where we have Community Members signed up to the scheme are between the ages of 25-44. More work is required for the plus 45 age bracket. We have an ageing population and this will be a key area to target.

3. Gender
 - 158 Male,
 - 133 Female
 - 9 did not want to disclose.

Analysis

More males than females have signed up to the scheme with 53% of the take up.

4. Sexual Orientation

- Bi-sexual (4)
- Gay (4)
- Heterosexual (195)
- Lesbian (4)
- Not disclosing (93)

Analysis

65% of the members class themselves as heterosexual while 31% preferred not to disclose the information. Gay/Lesbian and Bi-sexual community is not reflected well to in our current states for joining the scheme. Key partnership working with the LGBT community could be key areas to gain more membership.

5. Ethnicity

White /White British/ White Irish	Asian/ British Asian	Black/ Black British	Mixed / Mixed British	Other Ethnic group
British 157 Irish 5 Other White 5	Asian British 21 Indian 11 Pakistani 17 Bangladeshi 3	Black British 23 Caribbean 6 African 4 Other Black 0	W/B C'bean 16 W/B African 21 W/Asian 5 Other Mixed 4	Other Arab 2
167 54.2%	52 18%	33 11.1%	46 16%	2 0.7%
Community Profile 70%	18%	6%	3%	1%

Analysis

White British (52%) are the highest category of people to be joining the scheme followed by Black British & Asian British (7%). However at this stage we are, in certain ethnic groups over representative in these groups.

Cultural festivals could be key areas to attract a diverse up take and create more awareness e.g. Vaisakhi, Caribbean food festival and EID MELA.

6. Religion & Belief

- Atheist (33)
- Buddhist (0)
- Christian (135)
- Hindu (5)
- Jewish (0)
- Muslim (14)
- Sikh (9)
- Other Religion (12)
- Not disclosing (92)

Analysis

Largest numbers of Community Members are Christians (43%) with (31%) Not disclosing being the next highest category. No uptake from the Jewish community.

7. Website versus Form

- Website (149)
- Form (151)

Analysis

There has been an even spread on the different ways the community sign up to the scheme.

8. What do members most want to get involved in? (possible to opt for more than 1 involvement)

- Newsletters (211)
- Open days (206)
- Safety Awareness (178)
- Volunteering (175)
- YFA (98)

Analysis

Newsletters and Open days are the areas on where the public are most interested in and would like to be involved in safety awareness and volunteering work are also highly recommended request from the Community.