

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JUNE 2016

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

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Scrutiny Committee note the progress made by the Service in relation to DICE.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee to review and consider the progress being made to support the Service in advancing DICE to support our equality objectives as well as our statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010.

3. **BACKGROUND**

The DICE objectives contained within the DICE Report, were developed in consultation with functions and departments across the Service. The objectives not only fulfil our legal duties as a public sector organisation under the Equality Act 2010, but also help address areas of development towards achieving excellence in the Equality Framework.

This report details our continued progress towards achieving our objectives and is structured under four themes taken from the Equality Framework for FRS'.

4. **Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Development**

- 4.1 Our People priorities have been refreshed to include 'The Service will achieve diversity, inclusion, cohesion, and equality outcomes for its diverse community and workforce'. All SET members are responsible for achieving DICE

outcomes and the Strategic Enabler of People will seek to integrate DICE objectives into organisational development and level 3 plans across the Service.

- 4.2 Following a review of our maternity provision, a number of improvements have been made including a full review of our maternity policy, generation and publication of guidance documents for both line managers and employees, as well as additional support being provided via our People Support Services (PSS) Business Partners. Our maternity pay has been further enhanced, recognising the benefits of both employee retention and increasing our recruitment talent pool. This demonstrates our commitment to gender diversity and that the retention of our women employees is crucial and continues to be a priority for the organisation.
- 4.3 International Women's Day (IWD) took place on 8th March and to support this global event, our DICE team and other colleagues, developed a number of activities for employees to participate in throughout the month of March. Activities included Minerva observation and practice, Menopause drop in sessions, identifying domestic violence, Cancer Research Race for Life volunteer drive, Infant First Aid, Car Care sessions, RTC awareness as well as promotional display boards around HQ showcasing influential women through the ages.
- 4.4 The approach taken to IWD and the programme of activity has been used during May for the run up to PRIDE, and will be used in October for Black History Month.
- 4.5 We have signed up to become a Stonewall Champion and will be working with Stonewall to further progress LGBT issues within WMFS. Stonewall will help us build on the steady progress – LGBT declarations among our employees have doubled in the last 4 years. Stonewall will advise us on how best to implement various initiatives including an 'allies' scheme which has been successful in many organisations in both public and private sector, creating a more inclusive environment.

Stonewall will also carry out a full audit of WMFS in regards to LGBT issues which will be a key indicator into organisational culture following the impact of the Essex report on UK FRS.

- 4.6 The DICE team have started to re-energise our stakeholder groups including the Race Equality Forum (REF), Affinity and Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA). We have engaged with the stakeholder groups and gained their feedback regarding positive action and our statement of intent.
- 4.7 During April, May and July the DICE team will be delivering interview and selection skills training for managers. The training will be targeted at new managers. The sessions will reinforce and embed the Recruitment & Selection Framework, ensuring that our recruiting managers are able to assess behaviours during selection. The training will also include awareness of unconscious bias during recruitment activity.
- 4.8 The DICE team, in collaboration with colleagues from the E-Learning Team, have produced a disability video, 'Behind the Mask' which includes 6 employees talking openly about their disability. It is hoped that the video will encourage those with disabilities to come forward and disclose, as well as raise awareness amongst employees about disabilities.
- 4.9 The video has been launched internally and with regional partners, on the BBC Disability Network, via Social Media, and through MIND Mental Health Charity.
- 4.10 Working proactively with both managers and employees, the PSS Business Partners continue to raise awareness of the importance of disability disclosure. Disclosure is monitored and we have seen a steady increase in disclosure which is currently at 88% across the organisation.
- 4.11 Our workforce planning activity ensures that we are able to understand our age profile which is essential for us to mitigate any potential risks associated with an ageing workforce. We have recently developed our Wellbeing Strategy which seeks to ensure that our employees are resilient, motivated, committed and flexible and prepared for change.
- 4.12 We are currently working in partnership with MIND, the leading mental health charity in the UK, and we have recently signed the MIND Blue Light Pledge. The programme has assisted us in expanding and enhancing the good work we have already achieved in de-stigmatising mental health and

providing fast-track assistance and support.

- 4.13 Our approach to Firefighter Fitness has been developed in line with CFOA research and guidance and we are currently implementing annual fitness assessments for all operational personnel. This enables early intervention for any fitness related issues, provides bespoke 'work up' programmes for individuals as well as actively monitoring fitness levels. This will support our operational firefighters in maintaining good health and fitness as they get older.

5. **Knowing and Involving our Communities**

- 5.1 Working alongside the Community Safety teams and in collaboration with our stakeholder groups, we are developing a Careers Pack which will be launched in September 2016 in line with the new academic year. This will include a brochure as well as a presentation pack for use in both primary and secondary schools highlighting the wide range of positive impacts WMFS has on the community and profiling the diversity of our workforce and role models among BME employees and women firefighters.
- 5.2 It is the intention to liaise with colleges across the West Midlands who run Public Service Courses with the intention of organising a 'challenge cup' to take place during November / December. This will be in line with the colleges' curriculum. This will be done in collaboration with our stakeholder groups, Affinity, REF and AFSA.
- 5.3 Working alongside the Road Casualty Reduction team and through our links with the Placement Teams at Solihull College we have offered a number of work experience placements to students who are currently undertaking the Public Services Course. To date we have worked with 6 students. It is the intention to roll this out to other colleges across the West Midlands.
- 5.4 We see our Community Members, who both live and/or work in the West Midlands, as important ambassadors for our work. 2,200 community members receive communications from us in the form of invitations to events and newsletters about what's happening across the Service. Ongoing contacts are made and it is the expectation that this will continue and that

our community members will be reflective of the diverse communities of the West Midlands.

- 5.5 Our Community Safety Strategy (CSS) provides a wide and detailed view of the communities we serve and the risks that exist in them, so that we are able to effectively plan and allocate our front line resources in the right way to achieve our attendance standards, the most important being to attend all high risk incidents within 5 minutes.
- 5.6 Within the analysis that the CSS provides, we are able to effectively identify and target vulnerable community groups with the aim of informing and educating them of the risks that exist in their home and community, supporting the prevention of fire and road traffic collisions.

This kind of analysis from a prevention, protection and response perspective is important as risks will be different in different areas of the communities we serve. The CSS helps us to identify these differences.

The CSS then informs the development of our Corporate Strategy, The Plan. The Plan guides our staff and key stakeholders to the priorities and outcomes we want to achieve over a three year rolling period. These priorities built against the risks that we know we need to address, inform the development of internal work plans and the way in which we engage with other emergency services, public sector and other partners, including the NHS.

6. **Building a Skilled and Committed Workforce**

- 6.1 Detailed demographic data has been produced by the Workforce Planning team. This not only provides information with regard to our current workforce profile, but also provides forecasting data over the next 10 years.
- 6.2 Profile data is also being provided at a local level and is being used by our PSS Business Partners when discussing resource requirements and succession planning with local managers. Managers are being coached to raise awareness and understanding of the positive impact they can have on the profile of their teams and what measures they can put in place to actively encourage and support individuals from

under-represented groups.

- 6.3 Working alongside our colleagues in learning and development we are developing our approach to buddying, mentoring and coaching. These interventions will be aligned and more accessible to all. We will actively monitor the profile of our buddies and coaches as well as monitoring who is accessing this support.
- 6.4 Our Manager as Coach Programme includes how to approach coaching conversations with diverse groups. This programme has been delivered to our DTM team to enable them to support other managers across the organisation.
- 6.5 The next Reach for the Stars programme commenced in April 2016 with further cohorts running in May and June 2016. The programme focuses on personal development and enables development and growth towards individual potential enhancing empathetic awareness and emotional intelligence, assertiveness and confidence as well as personal resilience in managing change.

7. **Responsive and Accessible Service**

- 7.1 In support of our vulnerable people officers and 'safe and well' visits, our specialist deaf team carry out visits to homes among the deaf community. Since January 2016 (up to mid-March) 34 visits have been carried out. The team have also delivered presentations to professional groups, attended charity events and supported risk assessments in sheltered housing.

The specialist deaf team has 9 active members with varying accreditation levels, with a further two people studying. There continues to be interest amongst employees to develop skills.

- 7.2 Since its launch in November 2015, our crews have delivered over 8,000 Safe and Well Visits to some of the most vulnerable in our community.
- 7.3 Every primary school in the West Midlands (790) has been engaged with our 'Schools Safety Challenge' which promotes a positive attitude to safety among young people and promotes the Fire Service as a career choice for young

people from under-represented groups.

- 7.4 Our Community Members have recently been invited to take part in a focus group looking at our new internet site, along with visits to both Safeside and Fire Control. One of the key principles of being a Community Member is that the engagement received from us is meaningful.

Following feedback from internal discussions each Fire Station will now be able to identify more easily who their 'local' Community Members are and look to start the journey of building a 'relationship' through engaging, informing and educating them with the aim that some of these Community Members will in turn be able to support the station in some of their activities within the local communities and become our ambassadors.

Some stations e.g; Haden Cross have already started to have an impact and build that relationship with their Community Members by sending out their own electronic newsletter. This has already received positive feedback. Bloxwich, Tettenhall and Tipton Fire Stations are also working on building closer links with their local members.

8. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This report responds directly to the General and Specific duties of the Equality Act and considers the DICE 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 of the protected characteristics.

9. **RISK IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

10. **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.

11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

The contact name for this report is DCFO Phil Hales, telephone number 0121 380 6004.

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