

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/14/6
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT
DATE OF MEETING	23 JULY 2014
SUBJECT OF REPORT	EQUALITY STRATEGY – ‘SAFER LIVES, BRIGHTER FUTURES’ - MONITORING REPORT: APRIL 2013 TO JUNE 2014
LEAD OFFICER	Area Manager (Community Safety, Corporate Communications & Information, Community & Workplace Equalities)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a) that the Authority be invited to adopt the Core Values and Behavioural Framework appended to this report, and referred to in Section 3 of this report;</i></p> <p><i>(b) that, pending (a) above, the Clerk be authorised to amend the accountabilities, roles and responsibilities of Members of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority constitutional governance framework document to reflect adoption of the new Core Values and Behavioural Framework; and</i></p> <p><i>(b) that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Implementation of the Equality Strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, helps to ensure that the Service is meeting its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Strategy is regularly monitored by the corporate Equality Steering Group. There have been a number of successes recently including development of new core values and a behavioural framework, awards for Fire Pride and the hosting of a women’s development day.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	No additional resource implications
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	There is no requirement to carry out an ERBA on this report, however information on the ERBA process is contained within the report.
APPENDICES	A. Core Values Behavioural Framework
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Brighter Lives, Safer Futures’

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) provides legal protections for people based on their ‘protected characteristics’ which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 1.2 The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty which, in relation to the protected characteristics, requires the Service to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people.
- 1.3 The Service’s Equality Strategy 2012-2016, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, sets out the objectives and action plan that enables it to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Strategy is also helping the Service work towards achieving the ‘Excellent’ level of the national Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework. Later this year a review will be undertaken of progress by the Service against the criteria in the Framework and agree the best time to request an assessment.
- 1.4 The Equality Strategy is regularly monitored by the cross-functional Equality Steering Group which has a membership of fifteen employees and includes the representative bodies and a member of the Fire Pride (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) network and WANDS (Women’s Action Network).
- 1.5 Externally, the Service consults and seeks advice on the strategy from Community Advisory Groups through facilitated discussions with members of community and voluntary sector organisations in north Devon, Taunton, Exeter and Plymouth.
- 1.6 This report provides an update on four areas of the Equality Strategy:
- Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis
 - The new Core Values and behavioural framework
 - Fire Pride network
 - Women’s Action Network (WANDS)

2. EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS

- 2.1 As referred to above, the Service has a legal responsibility to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and demonstrate that it has given ‘due regard’ to potential equality impacts in its service delivery and employment practices. To do this, the Service uses a process called Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis (ERBA) when developing or reviewing projects and policies (some local authorities use the expression Equality Impact Assessments). This helps policy developers to think about how proposals might impact on people with one or more of the protected characteristics and what actions can be taken to mitigate the risks of potentially negative impacts.
- 2.2 Importantly, the ERBA process is also used when considering strategic decisions about different ways of operating that may impact on communities and employees e.g. the Corporate Plan proposals, approved by the Authority in July 2013, were each subject to an individual ERBA. As any further new ways of working are researched and developed, ERBAs will be carried out to ensure equalities-related risks are minimised for communities and employees and that the Service complies with its legal duties.

3. THE NEW CORE VALUES AND BEHAVIOURAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 New core values and an associated behavioural framework have recently been agreed following extensive employee engagement. The previous core values were the national values for fire and rescue services and, whilst they were perfectly valid, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service employees were not involved in their development and so felt little 'ownership' of them. It was agreed to involve employees in discussions aimed at creating a new set of values and a behavioural framework.
- 3.2 The discussion groups encouraged employees to think about and record the behaviours and ways of working that illustrate three standards – ideal, expected and unacceptable. Four broad themes emerged from the feedback, which now form the core values:
- Honesty, clarity and accountability
 - Respect for each other
 - Working together to improve
 - A 'can do' attitude.
- 3.3 Many of the very practical examples of behaviours and ways of working that were recorded in the discussion groups have been included in a wider behavioural framework (Appendix A). This helps to clarify what the values mean in practice and brings them to life. The framework sets out what the Service stands for and what matters most to employees and the organisation. It also allows staff and managers at all levels to know what is expected of them and what they can expect in return.
- 3.4 The new values are now being used across the Service, for example in team meetings, on drill nights, following incidents and in one-to-one meetings. The Service is also looking at how it ensures these important principles underpin all of its activities and the way in which the Service operates. This includes reviewing some Service processes and procedures in the light of the new framework to reinforce the values and example behaviours. The Service is reviewing the content of its one-day equalities training course for managers to ensure that the core values are used regularly with their teams and that managers "role model" the expected behaviours.
- 3.5 Helping to develop the core values was a very positive experience for many employees. There was clear feedback that staff do want to be involved and have ideas they wish to share on how the Service can improve and develop. The Service intends to follow up on this by carrying out more employee engagement in other areas in future.
- 3.6 Finally, in addition to having the required Members Code of Conduct under the Localism Act 2011, Authority Members previously agreed to adopt the former, nationally-developed core values. Given that these have now been replaced in the Service by more bespoke, internally-generated values, the Authority is invited to adopt the new Core Values and Behavioural Framework and to reflect this by an amendment to the Roles and Responsibilities of Members of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority document that forms part of the Authority's constitutional governance framework.

4. FIRE PRIDE

- 4.1 Fire Pride, the Service's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) support network, has received national recognition for the important role it plays. The network was set up two years ago to provide support and guidance to individual employees and to the organisation on LGBT issues. The work of the network helps to increase the number of employees who feel able to be themselves at work and be open about their sexual orientation, if they choose.
- 4.2 Earlier this year, Fire Pride was recognised as a 'star performer' network by Stonewall, the national LGB campaign and support organisation. Fire Pride has also made a major contribution to the Service's continuing improvement in Stonewall's annual workplace equality index which sets the standard for employers who want to provide the best possible working environment for their gay staff and promote workplace equality in its wider sense. This year the Service leapt up to 54th place in the index – an improvement of 37 places on last year - making the Service one of the UK's leading organisations for LGBT equality. 369 employers entered the index from across the public, private and third sectors.
- 4.3 More recently, Fire Pride was awarded 'highly commended' in the employee network category at the enei (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) awards. The enei awards recognise the commitment of organisations to achieving diverse and inclusive workplaces and celebrate the teams and individuals who are really making a difference.
- 4.4 Fire Pride was shortlisted alongside employee networks from some large and well-known public and private sector organisations. The winners of the same category were the Home Office and Ernst & Young also received highly commended.
- 4.5 Fire Pride was recognised for their significant levels of employee engagement and influence with the leadership team; evidence of how they have contributed to the organisation's objectives and evidence of how they have improved the working environment for staff.

5. WANDS – THE WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK

- 5.1 WANDS was set up in recognition of the fact that women are in a significant minority in the organisation, in particular in operational roles where they make up less than 4% of employees. In addition, very few senior operational roles are filled by women. WANDS helps to identify the issues that arise for women in the workplace and how the Service might address them. This includes looking at all aspects of employment - recruitment, induction, training, working in role, development and progression.
- 5.2 In May, WANDS held a development day at Service Headquarters with delegates from across Devon and Somerset and neighbouring services. The theme of the day was 'challenging perceptions' and delegates were inspired to reflect on this theme by three speakers - Dany Cotton, Assistant Commissioner, London Fire Brigade, Mandy McBain, client account manager at Stonewall (following a career in the Royal Navy) and Claire Harvey, captain of the GB women's seated volleyball team at the 2012 Paralympics and ex-prison governor.

5.3 Several discussion groups considered ideas for resolving issues for women based around three broad themes of recruitment, working in role and progression. The ideas put forward will form the basis of an action plan aimed at reducing the gender imbalance. Following this event, nine women from the Service attended the national Women in the Fire Service training and development weekend at the Fire Service College. This gave the operational women the opportunity to test themselves in more complex multi-agency scenarios while the women in support roles learned more about the firefighter role through 'be a firefighter' workshops.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Implementation of the Equality Strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, helps to ensure that the Service is meeting its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. One of the main methods of discharging this duty is through the Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis process which is routinely applied to new and reviewed policies and will be completed alongside any new proposals for different ways of working.

6.2 The Equality Strategy is regularly monitored by the corporate Equality Steering Group. There have been a number of successes recently including development of new core values and a behavioural framework (now commended to the Authority for adoption), awards for Fire Pride and the hosting of a women's development day.

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