

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/17/2
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT
DATE OF MEETING	24 MARCH 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	WORKFORCE CULTURE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Service Improvement
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	There are significantly increased political expectations for the Fire & Rescue Service nationally regarding workforce reform, increasing diversity of employees and improved culture and inclusion. The Service has already made progress in these areas over the past few years and has a number of plans already in place. The future approach will be driven by the new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and a new people strategy and equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. These will enable the Service to achieve the cultural changes needed to support current and future challenges and to make us a more inclusive, diverse and effective public service that reflects our communities.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	No additional resource implications.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	There is no requirement to carry out an ERBA on this report.
APPENDICES	A. Local Government Association report March 2017 - An Inclusive Service; the 21 st century fire and rescue service.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	The following speeches: Theresa May's speech, as Home Secretary, to Reform in May 2016. Minister for Policing & Fire, Brandon Lewis's, speeches to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFOA conference in September 2016 • Asian Fire Service Association conference in November 2016 • Reform in February 2017.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report sets the equalities work already achieved within the context of the national drivers for change concerning workforce culture, diversity and inclusive working practices. Achieving a more diverse workforce and inclusive workplace will bring benefits for communities, employees and the organisation in terms of improved services, attracting talent, innovation and internal and external collaboration.
- 1.2 The report references a recent Local Government Association report on Fire Service Inclusion and sets out the next steps for how the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (hereinafter referred to as “the Service”) will plan and deliver this cultural change, including a new people strategy and equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, shaped by the national drivers for cultural change and the requirements of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan.

2. **GOVERNMENT DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

- 2.1 There are significantly increased political expectations for the Fire & Rescue Service nationally regarding workforce reform, increasing diversity of employees and improved culture and inclusion. In recent speeches, Brandon Lewis MP, Minister for Policing & Fire, has consistently set out the Government vision for three ‘pillars’ of reform, one of which concerns the fire service workforce.
- 2.2 One element of this reform is to take a fresh look at how diversity in the workforce can be improved in order to better reflect communities and ensure that Services can benefit from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. The Government expects real and purposeful change and recognises that the role of culture and inclusion is key to making positive transformational change in the fire and rescue service.
- 2.3 The Adrian Thomas review into conditions of service, published in November 2016, also provides a significant framework for modernising and transforming the workforce. The recommendations recognise that culture and trust are central to many of the changes needed to create high performing fire services aligned to the needs of people. This includes the culture change required to accept that women, ethnic minorities and all groups making up the diversity of the working population have a place in the fire and rescue service.
- 2.4 The plans to establish a new inspectorate for fire and rescue services, leading to greater transparency, provide an important backdrop to the required workforce reforms. The inspectorate is to be modelled on Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, with a focus that includes leadership, training, diversity, values and culture. The first inspection is likely to take place this year and will include a consideration of diversity in its remit.

3. **LGA REPORT - AN INCLUSIVE SERVICE, THE 21ST CENTURY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

- 3.1 On 7 March at the annual fire conference, the Local Government Association (LGA) launched a report entitled ‘An Inclusive Service – the 21st century fire and rescue service.’ (Appendix A). The report is aimed at everyone with an interest in the fire and rescue sector but particularly at members of fire and rescue authorities. It focuses on recruiting, retaining and developing a more diverse workforce, essential to transforming the service to meet current and future challenges.

3.2 The report argues that, whilst the role of firefighters has changed dramatically in the last few years in response to changing risks and demands, many potential recruits are deterred by outdated perceptions of the job. Therefore, Services are missing out on a large pool of talent as many people think it is not a profession for them. This is occurring at a time when the best talent is needed to respond to the significant changes that lie ahead. The report stresses the need to challenge existing stereotypes of who can be a firefighter and what the job involves if the best recruits are to be attracted.

3.3 The report is very practical and includes case studies, best practice and viewpoints from diverse perspectives. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is included in the report as an example of best practice in providing support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees through the development of the Fire Pride network. It also referenced the work done to achieve a more inclusive culture around sexual orientation, guided by Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index. This was recognised by the achievement in two consecutive years of a place in Stonewall's top 100 employers for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equality and the Service continues to be a Stonewall diversity champion.

4. **NATIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY**

4.1 The LGA report outlines how the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is developing a people strategy in response to the recommendations in the Adrian Thomas review; in Sir Ken Knight's "Facing the Future" report and to the drivers for change linked to the reduction in fires and the increase in partnerships and collaboration.

4.2 It is the NFCC's intention that every fire and rescue service either amends the strategy to produce their own local strategy or ensures the main themes and principles are echoed in their own strategy. The national strategy will identify six key areas of work:

- Strengthening leadership and line management to support organisational change and improved community outcomes;
- Developing cultural values and behaviours that make the fire and rescue service a great place to work for all employees;
- Developing ways of working that are able to respond to service needs;
- Providing excellent training and education to ensure continuous improvement of services to the public;
- Continuing to support the health and wellbeing of all employees;
- Strengthening our ability to provide good services by diversifying our staff and creating a fair and equal place to work.

4.3 The report concludes by posing fifty questions, developed through reflection on the comments and input from the individuals and groups who contributed to the report. The purpose of the questions is not to provide a checklist but to provide a starting point for further thought and conversations for both members and officers.

4.4 The questions cover the following areas:

- Workforce data – e.g. collection, monitoring and action planning on workforce diversity monitoring at all stages of the employment lifecycle.
- Recruitment – e.g. positive action initiatives, apprenticeships, targeting, barriers to recruitment;

- Workplace culture – e.g. staff views on culture, approach to inclusion, unconscious bias, inclusive leadership.
- Perception – e.g. public image, community engagement, use of social media, publicity materials.

5. **DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS IN EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

5.1 For many years, the Service has worked to develop and improve its approach and outcomes in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, recognising the benefits that will bring for both employees and communities. Through the previous Equality Strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures 2012-2016, a number of achievements have already been made which support the proposals and recommendations in the recent LGA report. These include:

- Engaging employees in developing new core values and a behavioural framework which are now embedded into working practices. The framework sets out what the Service stands for and what matters most to individual employees and the organisation and allows staff and managers at all levels to know what is expected of them and what they can expect in return;
- Providing a new, simplified approach to the staff satisfaction survey focusing on the key drivers of employee satisfaction. The results have been embedded in various workplans and the survey will be repeated in June with the aim of increasing the response rate, particularly from the on call workforce;
- Twice achieving a place in the prestigious Stonewall Top 100 employers list which recognises the contribution to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality and diversity in the workplace;
- Achieving a national 'highly commended' award from the Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion for the Fire Pride LGBT network;
- In 2015, agreeing a positive action plan aimed at increasing the number of female on call firefighters (no wholetime recruitment was taking place at that time) and increasing the number of women in management positions and other senior roles across the Service;
- Supporting women to attend the national Women in the Fire Service annual Training & Development weekend at the Fire Service College, providing development opportunities for both operational and support employees;
- Developing and supporting employee networks including Fire Pride (LGBT), WANDS, the women's network, and the dyslexia support network. The WANDS network has held development days providing opportunities for women and men to discuss and put forward ideas on achieving a better gender balance in the Service;
- Reaching 'Achieving' level of the LGA's Equality Framework for Fire & Rescue Services and continuing to develop equalities work and priorities against the criteria of the framework.

6. **RECENT WORK TOWARDS INCREASED DIVERSITY AND CULTURE CHANGE**

- 6.1 In December 2016, the Service launched a wholetime recruitment campaign, the first such recruitment in 8 years. In order to attract interest from a more diverse range of people, a targeted marketing campaign was launched. This ensured that the wording and images used in the recruitment materials illustrated the diverse workforce we are working towards. It also demonstrated the range of activities carried out by modern firefighters with the message that the role is about much more than fires.
- 6.2 Women's sports groups, public service degree programmes and black, Asian and minority ethnic networks were identified and publicity materials sent direct to them, encouraging applications from those who met the criteria. Social media was also used including targeted messaging. Two taster events were held on fire stations with around a quarter of those attending being women.
- 6.3 2,483 candidates successfully registered an application by the closing date in January 2017 of whom 293 (11.8%) were female. Initial benchmarking with other fire and rescue services also recruiting wholetime firefighters shows that the proportion of female applicants is very similar nationally. Of the candidates who initially registered an application, 112 (3.9%) declared their ethnic origin as something other than white British.
- 6.4 The testing and selection process for the wholetime recruits is still underway with interviews scheduled to be complete by the end of May 2017.
- 6.5 In 2016, to support the scale and pace of change needed in the Service, the Organisational Development team was established. The purpose of the team is to transform corporate and individual effectiveness and support strategic priorities by improving the way people are led, managed and developed. The team operates by facilitating change and improvement with a range of planned, people-focused interventions using approaches drawn from the fields of organisational and behavioural sciences.
- 6.6 The draft Organisational Development work plan is already very closely aligned to the 6 themes (paragraph 4.2 of this report refers) in the national people strategy being developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council. Work is already underway under these themes, including reviewing leadership and management programmes, improving promotion and progression processes, developing a coaching strategy and supporting suitable employees to undergo training, facilitating service mapping of support services and team development, progressing the principles of smart working and reviewing and developing policies and practices to support continuous improvement of the on call delivery model.

7. **NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 It is important to recognise and reflect upon the achievements and positive outcomes during the four year life of the Safer Lives equality strategy. This, together with the more recent work that has been carried out, or is planned or underway, means that the Service is building on a strong foundation. However there is much more work to be done, in particular to achieve the scale of change required to support our communities in the future.
- 7.2 The Service is currently gathering and analysing data in order to produce a new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to ensure we have the right plans and resources in place to reduce the risks faced by our communities. This will set the direction of our work over the next few years.

- 7.3 Once the IRMP has been agreed, a people strategy will be developed to ensure that the Service has the right people, roles, contracts, skills, attributes, policies and supporting processes to meet the business needs as set out in the IRMP. It will also be closely linked to the national people strategy being developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council and its 6 key areas of work as set out in paragraph 4.2 of this report.
- 7.4 Alongside the people strategy a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy will be developed, building on the achievements of the Service over the past few years. The new strategy will need to be much more ambitious in its scope than previous strategies in order to drive the changes that will be needed to support the IRMP and to make us a more effective organisation that reflects our communities. It will address all issues relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace at each stage of the employee lifecycle, including attraction, recruitment, retention, development and progression.
- 7.5 As the recent LGA report reflects, cultural changes and improving the diversity of the workforce will take some time to achieve. The new strategies will define objectives with ambitious performance measures and targets well into the future.
- 7.6 Preparation for the new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy is already underway through a review of the previous strategy and research into best practice elsewhere. The Service is committed to identifying and removing or reducing any barriers, real or perceived, to people from all the diversity groups applying to join the organisation. To support this, we are in the early stages of commissioning external research aimed at identifying these barriers in order to inform our future campaigns and activities.
- 7.7 The questions posed at the end of the LGA report on inclusion (paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of this report) are also providing a good vehicle for analysing the Service's current position and giving direction and priorities for the new strategy.
- 7.8 The National Joint Council has established the Inclusive Fire Service Group which has been undertaking national research amongst fire and rescue services and will be providing guidance and best practice. This will be drawn upon to develop our own strategy.
- 7.9 It has been identified that some aspects of change can only be addressed nationally such as the public perception of the modern firefighting role. The Government is considering a national media campaign on the image of firefighting as a career.

8. **PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

- 8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty 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. This 'due regard' is in relation to the protected characteristics.
- 8.2 The Specific Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty require us to have published equality objectives. There will be a gap this year until we have developed the new strategy, however the new Corporate Plan contains our three key commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion and these will ensure that we are meeting the requirements of the Specific Duties. The relevant extract from the Corporate Plan is:

"We put people and their individual needs at the heart of service planning and delivery and in our workplace practices. Our main equality, diversity and inclusion priorities are:

- Increasing public and community awareness of risk in order to reduce harm
- Delivering improved, tailored services by analysing and acting upon equality, diversity and inclusion considerations
- Achieving a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities and that is closely aligned to our core values.”

9. **CONCLUSION**

9.1 There are significantly increased political expectations for the Fire & Rescue Service nationally regarding workforce reform, increasing diversity of employees and improved culture and inclusion. The Service has already made progress in these areas over the past few years and has a number of plans already in place. The future approach will be driven by the new IRMP and a new people strategy and equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. These will enable the Service to achieve the cultural changes needed to support current and future challenges and to make us a more inclusive, diverse and effective public service that reflects our communities.

9.2 It is recommended that the report be noted.

GLENN ASKEW
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Improvement)