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| <b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>                        | <b>HRMDC/16/11</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>MEETING</b>                                     | <b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT &amp; DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>                             | <b>16 SEPTEMBER 2016</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>                           | <b>EQUALITY STRATEGY – ‘SAFER LIVES, BRIGHTER FUTURES’ MONITORING REPORT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER</b>                                | <b>Director of People &amp; Commercial Services</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>                             | <i>That the report be noted.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                           | Implementation of the Equality Strategy 2012-2016, 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. Highlights since the last report include the employee survey results and follow-up actions, increasing workforce diversity and a report on the Asian Fire Service Association development day, hosted by the Service in May. |
| <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>                       | No additional resource implications                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)</b> | There is no requirement to carry out an ERBA on this report                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>                                  | none                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>                   | Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Safer Lives, Brighter Futures’                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 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 Equality Strategy 2012-2016, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, sets out the objectives and action plan that assist the Service in meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 2. **A NEW EQUALITY STRATEGY FOR 2017-2020**

- 2.1 The current Strategy has a life of four years and comes to an end this year. There is a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish equality objectives at least every four years to help focus attention on priority equality issues in order to further improve service planning and delivery and employment practices.
- 2.2 The Service is in the process of developing the new Strategy which involves:
- a review of the action plan in the current strategy;
  - consideration of the equality aspects of corporate priorities;
  - seeking guidance from the national Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services;
  - internal and external consultation.
- 2.3 A draft of the revised Strategy will be brought to the Human Resources Management & Development Committee in December 2016 for consideration.

## 3. **EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS**

- 3.1 An employee survey is one of the key tools for measuring and improving employee engagement and satisfaction and the Service has carried out such surveys for a number of years. Research shows that having an engaged and satisfied workforce leads to greater productivity, reduced levels of sickness absence and an increase in discretionary effort i.e. a 'can do' attitude and willingness to go the extra mile.
- 3.2 A new approach was taken to the latest survey in order to simplify the approach, reduce the time taken to complete and encourage more employees to participate. Employees were invited to indicate their levels of satisfaction around nine core questions. These were new questions so it is not possible to make comparisons with previous surveys, however the results provide a baseline for future surveys. The results were analysed in-house and the main findings and next steps were communicated to employees in April 2016. The headline results were also presented to Human Resources Management & Development Committee on 10 March 2016.

- 3.3 There was a particularly positive response to the statement 'I understand how my role contributes to the work of the Service'. The majority of respondents were satisfied with their line manager's style and this was supported by many positive comments including some describing excellent managers who are seen as role models and mentors. The majority also agreed that their day to day experience is consistent with the core values with positive comments made about their experiences and the benefits of the core value framework itself. Most staff were also satisfied with their overall experience of working for the Service.
- 3.4 Around half of respondents said they were happy with the level of control and influence they have in their jobs and with their ability to achieve a good work/life balance, particularly relating to the wholetime duty system, flexi time and the amount of annual leave.
- 3.5 Looking across the questions and at both the numeric and many written responses, a number of cross cutting themes emerged which have been identified as priorities for further action and development. These are:
- Working together as one organisation – ensuring that all employees feel their roles and contributions are understood and valued by others.
  - Strategic direction and leadership – that the direction and priorities of the Service are clearly communicated and understood by employees and that leaders are visible role models.
  - Management styles – ensuring that all our managers are effective in their management and leadership practices and are supported to achieve this.
  - Employee engagement – ensuring a consistent approach to engagement with clear and effective opportunities for employees to be involved.
  - Communications – that major change issues are communicated effectively throughout the organisation and that information is prioritised, easy to read and targeted to those that need it the most.
  - Development and progression – that there is an increased focus on talent and succession planning and that processes and procedures are transparent and consistent.
  - Impact on wellbeing of reducing resources – that the risks of increased stress are understood and mitigated, that the wellbeing of employees continues to be monitored and the services available to support employees are understood.
- 3.6 The Service leadership were aware of most of these key themes and had already proposed, as part of the new structure, to bring relevant resources and skills together into an Organisational Development team. The team is now in place and is starting work to support change and transformation in the Service by improving the way people are led, managed and developed. The team strategy and working plan is being finalised but their focus will include leadership and management development, strategic workforce planning, service mapping, reviewing systems and processes, talent management, organisational culture and values, creating a more diverse workforce and employee engagement, inclusion and wellbeing.
- 3.7 The Organisational Development team will ensure that the key priorities identified in the employee survey are addressed so that individuals and the Service can benefit from increased engagement and satisfaction. They will also lead on future surveys to ensure that levels of satisfaction continue to be monitored and relevant action taken.

#### 4. INCREASING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

4.1 A diverse, more representative workforce can bring many benefits in terms of better services, more satisfied, engaged employees and a positive workplace culture. The Service has recognised the need for greater diversity in the workforce, particularly around gender, for some time. Eighteen months ago a positive action plan was approved with objectives to encourage more women to consider firefighting as a career and to get more women into leadership roles. It has been difficult to make significant progress to date due to limited operational recruitment. The issue is also a national one and other Fire & Rescue Services experience a similar gender imbalance.

4.2 There is now an increased national focus and expectation, however, that Fire and Rescue Services will proactively seek to redress workforce balances, particularly in gender and ethnicity, to ensure they are better representative of the communities they serve. Theresa May, when Home Secretary, made this clear in her speech at Reform. More recently she has called for an inequality review in public services. We can expect a greater focus on this, and equality and diversity in general, in any future inspections or assessments.

4.3 The gender and ethnicity workforce figures at 24 August 2016 are as follows:

| <u>GENDER</u>   | Male  | Male % | Female | Female % | Totals |
|-----------------|-------|--------|--------|----------|--------|
| Wholetime       | 558   | 96.5%  | 20     | 3.5%     | 578    |
| Retained        | 1099  | 96%    | 45     | 4%       | 1144   |
| Retained Casual | 7     | 100%   | 0      | 0        | 7      |
| Control         | 10    | 25.5%  | 29     | 74.5%    | 39     |
| Support         | 133   | 52.5%  | 119    | 47.5%    | 252    |
| Support Casual  | 5     | 45.5%  | 6      | 54.5%    | 11     |
| <u>Totals</u>   | 1,812 | 89%    | 219    | 11%      | 2,031  |

| <u>ETHNICITY</u> | White British | White British (%) | Other | Other (%) | Rather not state/no reply | Rather not state/no reply (%) | Totals |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| Wholetime        | 523           | 90.5%             | 11    | 2%        | 44                        | 7.5%                          | 578    |
| Retained         | 1058          | 92.5%             | 13    | 1%        | 73                        | 6.5%                          | 1144   |
| Retained Casual  | 6             | 86%               | 0     | 0         | 1                         | 14%                           | 7      |
| Control          | 38            | 97.5%             | 1     | 2.5%      | 0                         | 0                             | 39     |

| <b><u>ETHNICITY</u></b> | <b>White British</b> | <b>White British (%)</b> | <b>Other</b> | <b>Other (%)</b> | <b>Rather not state/no reply</b> | <b>Rather not state/no reply (%)</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Support                 | 218                  | 86.5%                    | 5            | 2%               | 29                               | 11.5%                                | 252           |
| Support Casual          | 8                    | 72.5%                    | 0            | 0                | 3                                | 27.5%                                | 11            |
| <b><u>Totals</u></b>    | <b>1,851</b>         | <b>91%</b>               | <b>30</b>    | <b>1.5%</b>      | <b>150</b>                       | <b>7.5%</b>                          | <b>2,031</b>  |

(Figures include 177 employees who have dual roles e.g. wholetime and retained)

- 4.4 The greatest gender imbalance is in the operational workforce, both wholetime and retained with approximately 96% male employees and 4% female. With regard to ethnicity, we are obtaining figures for the Service area so we can assess how representative the workforce is in relation to local communities.
- 4.5 A project plan is being developed by the Organisational Development team, aimed at delivering a more diverse workforce along with the cultural benefits that will bring. The plan will identify and review all relevant systems and processes in the Service to ensure they support the aim of achieving a more diverse workforce as part of cultural reform. This will include looking at systems and processes around recruitment (wholetime and on-call), fitness standards, the role/person specification of the modern firefighter, the role of advocates and volunteers, retained contracts, leadership development etc.
- 4.6 We will also be learning from other Fire and Rescue Services about what has worked for them and also from other organisations including the military and emergency services. The police, in particular, have achieved a great deal over the years and currently around 30% of police officers are female.

## **5. ASIAN FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT DAY**

- 5.1 On 27 May, DSFRS hosted a national development day on behalf of the Asian Fire Service Association and delegates from Fire & Rescue Services across the country attended the event. The theme was Responding to the Refugee Crisis: working individually, collectively and in collaboration with partners to achieve better outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers.
- 5.2 A mixture of speakers and workshops covered topics relating to asylum seekers, refugees, modern day slavery and hate crime with a focus on the role of fire and rescue services, particularly in prevention and protection.
- 5.3 A highlight of the day was listening to the life stories of Shoker Abobeker and Dena Rafati, both based in Plymouth and who are now working to support DSFRS but who previously sought asylum in this country.
- 5.4 The development day concluded that navigating the complex UK asylum system can leave many people feeling lost, isolated and with little control over their lives. Despite this, the day showed how working together in partnership can help refugees and people seeking asylum to speak out about their experiences and to tell us about the services that best meet their needs and will keep them safe.

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Service's Equality Strategy continues to be implemented and regularly monitored. Work is now underway to develop a new Equality Strategy which will be effective from 2017. The main priorities from the employee survey are being addressed by the new Organisational Development team along with actions to increase the diversity of the workforce.
- 6.2 It is recommended that the report be noted.

**JANE SHERLOCK**

Director of People & Commercial Services