

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	PC/21/5
MEETING	PEOPLE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 JULY 2021
SUBJECT OF REPORT	ANNUAL DIVERSITY AND RECRUITMENT REPORT
LEAD OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted and used as a baseline for following performance reporting at this Committee</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 provides for the general public sector equality duty. The duty requires Public bodies to publish equality information pertaining to the makeup of its workforce on an annual basis and covers all the protected characteristics including gender, disability, ethnic group, religion and sexual orientation.</p> <p>This year many of the efforts in relation to diversifying the workforce and attracting applicants with a diverse background have suffered to some extent from the pandemic, stagnating to some extent an previous increase in diversity in both our workforce and applicants.</p> <p>Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are positive results in many areas such as applications from women and minority groups. Some areas will need continued monitoring and efforts to further increase diversity need to continue to ensure the momentum is maintained.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	None
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	N/A
APPENDICES	A. Recruitment & Workforce Diversity Annual Report 2020
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Recruitment & Workforce Diversity Annual Report 2020

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 provides for the general public sector equality duty. This requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.2. The duty requires Public bodies to publish equality information pertaining to the makeup of its workforce on an annual basis and covers all the protected characteristics including gender, disability, ethnic group, religion and sexual orientation.

2. **KEY RESULTS**

- 2.1. The key findings identified in this set of data are:
- The COVID-19 pandemic has effected the recruitment of external people into operational roles as recruitment events and assessments were unable to take place or had significantly reduced capacity. On Call had 89 new starters, compared to 170 in 2019 and 138 in 2018.
 - In line with the previous point, there was a reduction in female On Call new starters, which with 14 was 7 less than the previous year. Together with 2 new female Wholetime staff starting in the same period the Service reached the highest ever female representation in operational roles with 106 roles occupied by women.
 - The On Call vacancies female application percentage is 16.6%, which is 2.5% higher than 2019.
 - The numbers of applicants with a minority ethnic background is higher than our community (5-6%) with Support 9.7%, On Call 7.7% and Wholetime 6.5%.
 - Operational female representation has remained broadly the same, with 14 women joining as On Call Firefighters and 5 taking on a Wholetime position, and 13 women left On Call positions.
 - For On Call, the female turnover is twice (18.1%) the level of male turnover (9.5%). This may indicate retention issues specific to this period during the pandemic.
 - In comparison to female representation, the amount of women gaining promotion in the operational roles is disproportionately low and no women gained a permanent promotion. This may indicate the existence of some barriers to progression.
 - The attraction rate from female applicants for Support vacancies near enough reflects the community.

- No applicants from ethnic minority groups were offered a Support role despite a 5.2% applications rate.
- The representation from ethnic minority groups in the service (0.8%) is 2-4 times less than in the community.
- Application rates from LGBT for Support (4.9%), On Call (3.8%) and Wholetime (10.1%) are all higher than the community (2.2%).
- The identification as LGBT (anything else than Heterosexual), with 2.2% identifying within this category, closely reflects the community average of 2.2%. In addition, the non-disclosure rate has reduced.
- Female representation in the Extended Leadership Team dropped from 28.5% to 21%.

Actions and plan

- 2.2. In line with the DSFRS Plan, a People Strategy has been implemented and is continuously monitored. Various initiatives are under way and planned to increase the diversity of the workforce in line with the DSFRS plan. Good practice within recruitment, including positive action, will be shared and implemented across the Service. Inclusion of ethnic minority staff has become more visible through setting up a support network and this drives initiatives and accountability in view of the events in society in relation to racism. The Service continues to monitor the impact of initiatives, including possible racism, through Equality and People Impact assessments.
- 2.3. New recruitment processes for operational staff were launched with a particular emphasis on eliminating bias including the introduction of anonymous recruitment. Current progression processes and development pathways, including promotion, are under constant review with new eligibility requirements being considered to create a more level playing field between staff groups and be more inclusive to Support Staff.
- 2.4. Monitoring of adverse impact around protected characteristics continuously throughout the Wholetime recruitment process stages will be introduced in 2021.
- 2.5. Positive action initiatives in relation to development in the form of Action Learning Sets and a Sponsoring programme have started, but outcomes may not be visible for a while due to the length of the programme.
- 2.6. Any positive action work is and will continue to be supported through working closely with the Asian Fire Service Association and the Employer Network of Equality and Inclusion. The Service achieved the Silver Standard in the Talent, Inclusion & Diversity Evaluation of the latter.

Additional actions agreed by the Service to improve diversity

2.7. The following additional actions have been agreed:

- Once COVID-19 guidelines are relaxed, implement 'Connecting the Community' project in line with work to increase visibility as 'Employer of Choice' for underrepresented groups
- The Executive Board to instigate 'Critical friend' group from senior community leaders from under-represented groups to assist EB in decision making and strategy development
- Inclusion & Diversity objectives to be set for all Extended Leadership Team (ELT) members
- Providing long term mentoring for all new recruits to support development and progression
- Improving uptake of exit interviews and ensure accurate recording of reasons for leaving to enable better monitoring of 'leaving' trends
- Monitor Pay for Availability implementation to ensure greater work/life balance is one of the benefits
- Remove all bias from employee application material. Increase outreach to communities to attract diverse talent.
- Analyse data and evidence regarding fitness standards and policy to determine if there is a disproportionate impact on women regarding retirement age.
- Fully integrate Psychological Safety and Inclusive management to ensure that all generations in the workplace get a supportive environment, enhancing retention.

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