

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	PC/22/6
MEETING	PEOPLE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	22 APRIL 2022
SUBJECT OF REPORT	RECRUITMENT & WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Finance, People & Estates
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>that the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 established the general public sector equality duty for all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; • advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and • foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. <p>Regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires the Authority to publish, annually, information (including the makeup of its workforce in terms of the protected characteristics including gender, disability, ethnic group, religion and sexual orientation) demonstrating its compliance with the duty.</p> <p>During the last twelve months the Service undertook a significant recruitment effort, which included opening the Wholetime process to external applicants for the first time since 2017. In 2021, a total of 3,274 individuals applied through the recruitment system for 218 advertised vacancies, of which 164 vacancies were advertised externally. This was nearly 3 times the number of applicants of 2020 and the difference is mainly due to the opening up of the Wholetime process to external candidates (1592) and the increased number of Professional/Support vacancies which were advertised (150% increase in vacancies and applicants).</p> <p>The pandemic is still impacting on recruitment, but to a much lesser extent than the previous year and mainly in relation to the amount of candidates able to be tested in sessions. On-call recruitment has had less emphasis and the reduced ability to run local recruitment events has severely impacted on number applicants. This, together with the usual turn-over, has resulted in the lowest number of On-call firefighters since 2003.</p> <p>Despite the promising diversity in applicants, diverse new recruits are less well represented, highlighting the need for further efforts to increase diversity.</p>

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	Not required.
APPENDICES	A. Recruitment & Workforce Diversity Annual Report January – December 2021
BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Equality Act 2010 (Section 149) The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (Regulation 4)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 established the general public sector equality duty for all public bodies 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; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.2. Regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 requires the Authority to publish, annually, information (including the makeup of its workforce in terms of the protected characteristics including gender, disability, ethnic group, religion and sexual orientation) demonstrating its compliance with the duty.
- 1.3. The 2021 report is now attached at Appendix A.

2. KEY RESULTS

- 2.1. The key findings identified in this set of data are:
- For a second year in a row the pandemic has influenced recruitment of external people into operational roles, especially in the first part of 2021, as recruitment events and assessments were unable to take place or had significantly reduced capacity. On-call had 97 new starters (89 in 2020), compared to 170 in 2019 and 138 in 2018. Wholetime recruitment was less affected.
 - There was another reduction in female On-call new starters, which – at 10 - was 4 less than the previous year. Together with 6 new female Wholetime staff starting in the same period and 18 women leaving operational roles (12 On Call and 6 Wholetime), Service female representation dipped following the highest recorded in 2020.
 - Both in the On-call and Wholetime groups, the female turnover was 17.1%. In Wholetime that is twice the level of male turnover (8.3%) and in On-call nearly one and a half times (12.1%).
 - The attraction rate from female applicants for Professional/Support vacancies near enough reflected the community.
 - The female application percentages of 14.1% for Wholetime and 17.7% for On-call were higher than the representation in the workforce (6%) and higher than in 2020 (10.8% and 16.6%).
 - Since 2018, the percentage of female applicants in the On-call group has increased significantly from 7.4% to 17.7% but in 2021 this did not lead to an increase in new female starters in that group (15.5% in 2020, 10.3% in 2021).

- The numbers of applicants with a minority ethnic background were higher than the community (5-6%) for all externally advertised vacancies other than On-call. However, percentages of new starters in this category were typically less than half the application rate.
- No people of colour were offered an On-call firefighter, Professional/Support or Control positions despite application rates of 1.2%, 5.5% and 4.3% respectively. For the Professional/Support group, this was the second year in which no people of colour were appointed.
- The representation of people of colour in the Service (0.9%) is nearly 3 times less than in the community (2.6%).
- Application rates from LGB (anything other than heterosexual) and identification of staff as LGB was higher than the community, with 2.6% identifying within this category, closely reflecting the community average of 2.2%.
- Female representation in the senior management team dropped from 21% to 19%.

3. ACTIONS AND PLAN

- 3.1. The Service People Strategy has been implemented and is continuously monitored. This includes various initiatives, either under way or planned, to increase the diversity of the workforce. Good practice within recruitment, including positive action, is shared and implemented across the Service. Inclusion of ethnic minority staff has become more visible through an active Multicultural Staff Support Network which 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. The People Strategy will be reviewed and updated in 2022.
- 3.2. New recruitment processes for operational staff are in place with a particular emphasis on eliminating bias including several anonymous stages at the start. 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 Professional/Support Staff.
- 3.3. Positive action initiatives in relation to development in the form of Action Learning Sets and a Sponsoring programme continue, with completed sets and sponsoring relationships showing good outcomes.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. Specific initiatives for recruitment, diversity and inclusion include:

- Fully embedding the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics within the Service. This includes recognising and promoting the value of EDI both within the Service and the wider communities served. The Service stands against all forms of discrimination, creates equal opportunities, promotes equality, fosters good relations, and celebrates difference.
- Starting the 'Connecting the Community' project in line with watch efficiency work to increase visibility as an 'Employer of Choice' for underrepresented groups.
- Instigation of a 'Critical friend' group from senior community leaders from under-represented groups to assist the Executive Board in decision making and strategy development.
- Provision of long-term mentoring for all new recruits to support development and progression.
- Improving the uptake of exit interviews and ensuring the accurate recording of reasons for leaving.
- enabling better monitoring of 'leaving' trends.
- Monitoring Pay for Availability implementation to ensure greater work/life balance is one of the benefits.
- Ensuring that all bias is removed from employee application material.
- Increasing outreach to communities to attract diverse talent.
- Fully integrating Psychological Safety and Inclusive management to ensure that all generations in the workplace have a supportive environment, enhancing retention.
- Monitoring all recruitment processes for adverse impact in relation to ethnic minority background and people of colour.

SHAYNE SCOTT
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