

Report of Director for Response

Update on the Activities of the Women@HWFire Group

Purpose of report

1. To update the Audit & Standards Committee on the work of Women@HWFire.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Audit and Standards Committee note the activities of the group Women@HWFire.

Introduction

2. Women@HWFire was originally launched to enable Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) management, at all levels, to truly explore and understand the experiences and challenges of being an operational woman as a minority group within the fire service both locally and nationally.
3. The group set out to improve these experiences and work with various Service departments to overcome any identified barriers, resulting in a number of positive outcomes. The aim has always been to contribute towards the Service's equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda.
4. The group consists of men and women from across the Service who are involved in discussions about shared topics affecting female staff from all areas, e.g. department staff as well as operational female members of staff.
5. Following on from the significant achievements delivered between 2020 – 2022 reported to the Audit & Standards Committee on 18 January 2023, Women@HWFire has been involved in the following activities:
 - Reviewed the Service's Menopause Guidance and actively supported the menopause workshops run for women in the Service. The workshops were very well attended with over 50 women involved in the sessions.
 - Supported a menopause masterclass focusing on menopause in the fire sector led by the FireFit Chair and NFCC Chief Operating Officer.
 - Reviewed the flexible working arrangements on offer for female operational staff.
 - Actively supported the inclusive recruitment initiatives for the 2023 Wholetime recruitment process by contributing to an informational video for staff, supporting the firefighter taster sessions and contacting female taster

session attendees to answer any questions about the role and encourage applications.

- Actively supported the ongoing inclusive recruitment initiatives for On-Call firefighters.
- Attended Wholetime and On-Call induction sessions to deliver awareness sessions around Women@HWFire and EDI to every course.
- Provided coaching and mentoring to employees and also to members of the public to encourage them to apply for the role of Wholetime and On-Call firefighter.
- Supported the people impact assessments conducted as part of the review of firefighter job-related physical tests and ensured a female instructor, or representative from Women@HWFire, is present at all firefighter selection tests.
- Contributed to the review of maternity wear in HWFRS which has helped shape the tender and procurement requirements for the provision of new workwear.
- Led an online positive action event 'An Introduction to the Fire and Rescue Service' as part of the Women in the Fire Service (WFS) Futures Programme.
- Participated in International Women's Day on 8 March 2023.
- Led a national positive action event through WFS on interview techniques and applications. This has now been incorporated into the Service's internal awareness sessions for the Wholetime firefighter recruitment process.
- Joined West Mercia Police colleagues at an Army Away Day designed to provide networking opportunities and improve listening and leadership skills.
- Attended the AFSA Women in Leadership conference and winter conference in March 2023.
- Attended the WFS national development weekend at the Fire Service College where one member of Women@HWFire delivered a 'Drive a Fire Engine' workshop.
- Took part in an episode of BBC Countryfile on wildfires.
- Arranged Difficult Conversation training for members.
- Supported the National Women in the Fire Service event to climb Snowdon in support of The Fire Fighters Charity.
- Delivered a 'Lift as you Climb' workshop for approximately 50 delegates from HWFRS and West Mercia Police. The event attracted the following guest speakers and was a remarkable success:
 - Sarah-Jayne Bray from Thames Valley Police who is a gender equality champion.
 - Georgina Gilbert who is a member of the Antarctic Fire Angels team.

6. The ongoing work delivered by Women@HWFire supports and delivers against targets laid out in our People Strategy by:

- i) Driving positive action to improve our workforce diversity.
- ii) Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for enhancing managerial leadership.

- iii) Supporting our culture and values and builds upon the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.

Awards/Accolades

- 7. The group also received several accolades during 2023, the most notable being the Dany Cotton Inspiring Leader Award presented by Women in the Fire Service UK. This award was won by the Chair of Women@HWFire, Group Commander Deborah Davies. In addition, the Chair Deborah Davies and ED&I Officer Kathryn Berry both received a Chairman’s Certificate of Commendation for the work being delivered across the organisation by Women@HWFire.
- 8. This work has been primarily driven by the group, and again I would like to place on the record my thanks to all involved for improving the equality and diversity of our Service in building a more inclusive environment for all staff, present and future.

Conclusion

- 9. The work delivered by Women@HWFire demonstrates our organisational commitment to supporting under-represented groups within HWFRS. It has added significant value to multiple areas of work, and continues to influence the changing profile in operational and support staffing managerial roles across the Service. The group remains committed to driving diversity within HWFRS as an organisational priority.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Small budgetary support for conferences, etc
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	Delivers and supports objectives set out in the People strategy
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	N/A
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Representative Body engagement is carried out when necessary
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not required – update paper

Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	N/A
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