

Report of the Head of Human Resources & Development

Organisational Development and Challenge Group Update and People Strategy 2020 – 2022 - Progress Update

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update on the Organisational Development and Challenge Group, including People Strategy progress in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended the following areas of progress are noted:

- i) The Organisational Development and Challenge Group continues to act as a critical friend with regards to cultural change;***
- ii) The People Strategy 2020 – 2022 has been approved and is now live on the Service website;***
- iii) An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer has been appointed and a Positive Action Plan has been approved to help increase our workforce diversity;***
- iv) Two FRA Champions for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion have been appointed; and***
- v) People Strategy objectives to be met by the HR & Development (HRD) team have been mapped into a People Delivery Plan, which also encompasses HMICFRS recommendations.***

Background

2. The Audit and Standards Committee has a role in the approval, monitoring and review in relation to the development and implementation of equality and fairness policies.
3. The purpose of the Organisational Development and Challenge Group (ODCG) is to act as a critical friend to the Senior Management Board in challenging our plans and processes in order to improve equality, diversity, consistency, transparency and outcomes. The Group is co-chaired by two middle managers representing both the operational and non-operational

aspects of the organisation. The Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix 1.

Progress Update

4. Since the last update, there has been progress in a number of important areas, as noted below.

Organisational Development and Challenge Group (ODCG)

5. The ODCG comprises a variety of employees from across the Service who often meet as task groups to undertake specific work. Virtual meetings and online consultation methods are being explored in light of COVID-19. The group continues to undertake work that assists in the implementation of the People Strategy. The People Strategy has been reviewed and updated in line with the NFCC People Strategy.
6. The ODCG has been involved in the areas set out below in paragraphs 7 to 12. In terms of future work, the ODCG has set up a task group to explore mechanisms for staff engagement within the organisation.

Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

7. The Service regularly attends AFSA National Conferences and events as a corporate member. Information and key learning points have been shared and discussed with the ODCG. Communications continue to be shared with staff to promote AFSA and share information on equality and inclusion matters.

Values

8. The ODCG set up a task group to lead engagement with staff to formulate our updated values. The new values have been rolled out across the Service and are now incorporated into plans, documents and activities to support for example; recruitment, policy development and appraisals.

Community Events

9. As part of our Positive Action Plan, we continue to support community events held to engage with and promote protected groups. The ODCG have supported our representation at local Pride events during 2019. The Service has also attended career events for children and young people to showcase the variety of careers available within the Fire Service to future generations.

Staff Networks

10. A Service wide Equality and Diversity Allies programme is being developed by the ODCG and HRD. We now have 24 Allies signed up to the programme.
11. As of October 2019 there is now also a staff led women's network – Women@HWFire who meet regularly and as there are some ODCG members involved in the women's network this provides a useful link. The group is

looking at various topics to try to improve experiences of presently employed operational women whilst also looking to the future regarding recruitment.

Collaboration

12. The ODCG work collaboratively with HRD and the wider Service to act as a critical friend for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. An Inclusion sub-group has been formed from ODCG Members to provide specific focused support and challenge.

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

13. The People Strategy 2020-2022 was agreed on 12 February 2020. A People Delivery Plan has been developed to encompass actions being taken to address our commitments to the People Strategy and actions relating to our workforce as outlined in the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.
14. The People Strategy outlines our clear commitment to developing and maintaining a diverse workforce. Our commitment to equality and diversity summarised a number of targets which are key priorities. These are:

Targets

- To embed our values throughout the Service
- To establish Equality & Diversity and Positive Action plans
undertaking positive action programmes to improve our workforce diversity
- To embed people-centred impact assessments to help drive improvements in services
- Regular data monitoring, collection and analysis
- Organisational Development and Challenge Group to act as a critical friend for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

People Strategy – Our Commitment to Equality & Diversity

15. Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion was audited in 2019, via Internal Audit. There was a recommendation we review and update the Equality and Diversity training available for staff.
16. The training package is being updated to incorporate our Service values and to help all our staff better understand and support our approach to advancing equality and diversity in the workplace. Work continues to explore other blended learning options for staff.
17. In April 2020, an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer commenced in post. The role of our EDI Officer is to develop policy, practice and projects that

will promote and increase diversity within Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service (HWFRS) and embed a culture of inclusion and cohesion across the organisation. It is also a key aspect of the role to work collaboratively across the organisation to devise ways of engaging with communities across the Service area and ensure they are included in our equality, diversity and inclusion work.

18. A Positive Action Plan has been agreed to improve our workforce diversity. The Women@HWFire network are fully engaged with the Service's ambition in this area and regularly support the development and delivery of our positive action activities and feed into wider discussions to support our overall Equality, Diversity and Inclusion aims.
19. Virtual options have been developed to continue to engage with minority groups during COVID-19 such as the development of a bespoke online female fitness programme supported by motivational videos and contact from our Women@HWFire members. These arrangements will continue to engage with potential female applicants for a future Firefighter recruitment campaign.
20. An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan has been drafted for consideration in order to further our work in this area. This will be considered by the Audit and Standards Committee as a separate agenda item at today's committee meeting.
21. Gender pay gap reporting is conducted and reviewed annually. An annual Employment Monitoring Report is also produced, and this data is analysed and published. Both reports are brought to this Committee for review and consideration.
22. A number of policies have been agreed and are available to support staff and managers e.g. 'Transitioning at Work - A Guide for Employees and Managers'. Policy review and development will continue during this financial year.
23. We are continuing to work collaboratively with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and regularly share best practice with West Mercia Police HR department.

Conclusion

24. The Service continues to make good progress in embedding its equality, diversity and inclusion agenda and will continue to provide updates to this Committee.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	We have a budget for EDI work; however should funding be required for specific projects this will be sourced.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	This update dovetails with the People Strategy, and our HMICFRS aims and actions.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	NA
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Staff networks and groups are regularly updated on the progress of EDI initiatives. This will continue as it's vitally important to ensure understanding and promote the aims and values of the Service.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	EQIA's are conducted to support policy development. Further guidance on EQIA's will be considered as we progress through delivery of the People Strategy.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Organisational Development & Challenge Group Terms of reference