

Report of the Head of Corporate Services

13. Update from the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Committee with an update from the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group since the last report on 25th March 2015
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Recommendations

It is recommended that the following areas of progress are noted:

- i) the progress undertaken by the Open for All Sub Group;***
- ii) Service representatives attended the recent Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) AGM and Development Day and provided an overview to the Equality & Diversity Advisory Group;***
- iii) Service representatives attended the recent UK Conference – Women in the Fire Service and will provide an update at the next Equality & Diversity Advisory Group; and***
- iv) the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group has agreed to identify the possibility of creating an over-arching Equality Framework and Action Plan in order to strengthen the current set of Equality Objectives.***

Background

2. The core function of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group is to promote equality of opportunity and thereby help to eliminate unnecessary and unlawful discrimination within Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and to develop a working environment where individual diversity is valued.
3. The Group meets quarterly and is represented by each department across the Service in order to mainstream Equality and Diversity across the whole Service. Two Authority Members and representatives of the trade unions also attend the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group meetings.
4. Since the last update reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 25th March 2015 there has been one meeting of the Advisory Group in June 2015, with the next meeting scheduled for 8th September 2015.

Progress Update

5. One meeting of the Open for All Sub Group took place on 19th May 2015. As a result of this, work is currently being undertaken to complete the following:
 - The exit interview form and associated process has been reviewed and is ready for implementation within the Service in August 2015.
 - Positive Action initiatives in relation to Recruitment and Development are being considered – an example of this includes a recent success at Bromyard whereby a recruitment campaign was inclusive of the Polish Community.
 - Positive Action initiatives are being identified which are linked with the nine protected characteristics
 - Minority communities and groups throughout Herefordshire and Worcestershire are being contacted through the Authority Member representatives on the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group in order to identify local community contacts.
6. Two members of staff represented the Service at the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) AGM and Development Day held at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) on 21st and 22nd May 2015 and an overview was provided to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group on 2nd June 2015. The key themes from the conference have been noted as follows:
 - Guest speaker Maurice Duffy, Chief Executive of Black Swan gave a presentation on adjusting to change.
 - Workshop facilitated by Tyne and Wear FRS on building community cohesion through safety and prevention
 - Workshop facilitated by Tyne and Wear FRS on addressing workforce diversity that had highlighted the positive action indicatives and strategies that had been implemented in relation to recruitment
 - Workshop sessions by Dr Imran Awan Criminologist at Birmingham University that focussed on the radicalisation in Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and how the FRSs “non-threatening” reputation can be a powerful tool within local communities, particularly regarding signposting.
7. Three operational staff members (2 males and 1 female) attended the Women in the Fire Service – UK Conference in June 2015 and these members will be presenting an update at the next Equality and Diversity Advisory Group meeting on 8th September 2015.
8. The Equality and Diversity Group met in June 2015 and the following strands of work were identified.
 - Identify the possibility of creating an over-arching Equality Framework and Action Plan in order to strengthen the current set of Equality objectives
 - Provide an on-going programme of Equality and Diversity training to SMB and throughout the Service.

Conclusion

9. The Service continues to make progress in embedding its Equality and Diversity agenda and will continue to provide updates to this Committee.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The core function of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group is to promote equality of opportunity and thereby help to eliminate unlawful discrimination within the Service. This will help the Authority meet its Public Sector Equality Duty obligations as set out in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The work of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group links to the values set out in "Our Strategy"
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not necessary, this report provides an update of current work and does not require a decision to be made

Contact Officer

Sally Anne Chidwick, Human Resources and Development Manager
(01905) 368318
Email: schidwick@hwfire.org.uk