

Report of the Head of Human Resources

14. Equality and Diversity Advisory Group Update

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Policy and Resources Committee of the key areas of discussion at the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group meeting on 16 July 2013.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of this report.

Background

2. The core function of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group is to promote equality of opportunity and thereby help to eliminate unlawful discrimination within Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and to develop a working environment where individual diversity is valued. The Group meets quarterly and is represented by each department of the Service in order to mainstream equality and diversity across the whole Service. The Group's main activities is to:
 - a. Act in an advisory capacity to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA), Senior Management Board (SMB) and other interested parties and drive the mainstreaming of Equality and Diversity as much as possible, with Human Resources (HR) retaining a specialist role.
 - b. Support the need for Equality and Diversity to be viewed as a cross-organisational priority to be incorporated into day to day activity as far as possible.
 - c. Provide feedback to both the Senior Management Board and the FRA's Policy and Resources Committee.
 - d. Advise SMB and the FRA to ensure that the Authority meets the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
 - e. Review the Service's Equality Objectives and Action Plan to ensure they meet organisational needs.

- f. Examine opportunities for development of activity to meet local, regional and national needs.
- g. Respond to local concerns, and ensure systems are in place to allow concerns to be raised by stakeholders. The group will develop and co-ordinate effective and appropriate responses.
- h. Establish sub-groups / working groups on an issue-basis, with a view that they will exist for a finite period, with clear objectives for completion.
- i. Identify and disseminate good practice and organisational learning.

Quarterly Update

- 3. The fourth meeting of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group was held on 16 July 2013. The Group was chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
- 4. The Equality Action Plan, which supports the monitoring and delivery of the Service's Equality Objectives, was approved. The Action Plan is attached to this report at Appendix 1. This will now be published and made available to managers to deliver their responsibilities in embedding equality and diversity within all aspects of service delivery and support functions.
- 5. The Terms of Reference for the Positive Action Sub Group and advert to recruit to this were approved. The terms of reference are attached to this report at Appendix 2. The core function of the Positive Action Sub Group will be to recommend positive action initiatives to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group in order to seek improvements in recruitment and retention of underrepresented parts of the community and within service delivery practices.
- 6. The Employment Monitoring Data Report 2012/13 was approved. This report provides data in relation to the Service's employment profile and monitoring data from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 in relation to eight of the protected characteristics as required by the Equality Act 2010. This report will be brought to the next meeting of this Committee on 19 November 2013.
- 7. The Ethical Framework refresher training has been rolled out Service-wide. The Ethical Framework identifies the Service's values, purpose and the roles and responsibilities of all staff. The session for Authority Members on their role will incorporate equality and diversity and the Ethical Framework.
- 8. The National Health Service (NHS) Personal Fair and Diverse Charter was discussed and it was agreed the Service should support its ethos but not formally sign up to the Charter as the Service's strategy and values in relation to equality and diversity are contained in the Ethical Framework document. The Personal Fair and Diverse campaign originates from the NHS and was launched in November 2011. It has around 3,500 Champions nationally. The campaign helps bring the core values of the NHS Constitution to life. It does this through embedding equality and diversity into everything an organisation does, rather than making it a stand-alone function. It was previously identified by the NHS that there was a need for this as traditional approaches have raised general

awareness amongst employers and employees, they have also raised anxiety, highlighted differences and generally led to cultures where people are unsure, or afraid, to honestly talk about difference.

9. The Equality and Diversity Advisory Group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis in order to provide ongoing governance and scrutiny of Equality and Diversity issues. An update following this meeting will be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	None.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	None.
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?)	This is covered within the report.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: The Equality Action Plan, and Equality Objectives.

Appendix 2: The Terms of Reference for the Positive Action Sub Group.

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