

Report of Director for Response & Protection

Update on the Activities of the Women@HWFire Group

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update on the work of Women@HWFire.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the activities of the Women@HWFire group since it was set up in 2019 be noted.

Introduction

2. Set up in October 2019, Women@HWFire was originally launched to enable 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 ultimate aim has always been to contribute towards the Service's equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.
4. In 2020, the group encouraged and invited women from across the Service to be involved in discussions about shared topics affecting female staff from all areas, e.g. support staff colleagues as well as operational female members of staff.
5. Promoting and developing inclusion is a responsibility for all staff at HWFRS and in 2021 the group encouraged male colleagues to join Women@HWFire to support the aims of the group and to act as allies in addressing issues and creating a positive experience for all staff/employees. Women@HWFire will always champion a safe arena for women to talk about issues affecting them, but also believe that inclusion needs a cohesive approach, taking everyone on the journey.

Achievements

6. Since it was first established, the following achievements and work have been delivered to support HWFRS by Women@HWFire:

2019:

- December 2019 – Positive action event at the Worcester Warriors Sports Ground.

2020:

- Promotional video produced as a positive action initiative, encouraging women to apply for the wholetime firefighter recruitment programme.
- Women@HWFire actively supported the 14-week Female Fitness Programme; this included contacting candidates and offering support with fitness preparation.
- Women@HWFire liaised with Training Centre to ensure there was a mix of male and female assessors present at physical testing days.
- Input on Station Welfare Facilities to support the Property Programme.
- Supported school careers events to highlight the role of a firefighter to female school leavers.
- Attended Worcestershire Skills Show to promote female roles as a career choice within the fire service.
- Attended AFSA 'Women Advancement and Empowerment in the Workplace'.
- Attended NFCC 'Making the Difference' conference.
- Created and supported a buddy scheme initially targeted at new female operational recruits.

2021:

- Input on Women@HWFire was given to all new firefighter recruits from this point on; this was delivered by a member of the network for each intake.
- Members supported an International Women's Day Bulletin Feature, highlighting the contribution and experience of female staff.
- Attended 'Choose to Challenge Workshops' hosted by Women in the Fire Service, returning with feedback and recommendations to contribute to future in-house workshops.
- Supported the focus groups set up to review the Service's new 'Equality Objectives'.
- Reviewed and revised the operational welfare packs held on frontline appliances.
- Supported Operational Logistics with a review of PPE – in particular, the size of Incident Commander tabards to better meet the needs of both male and female members of staff. The availability of smaller sized kit for firefighter physical tests was also improved.
- Supported the review and provision for Station workwear.
- Supported skills development by running incident command practice sessions for members.

2022

- Supported Operational Logistics with a review of maternity wear provision for operational female staff.

- Four members from the group have been nominated to attend the national 'Women in the Fire Service' event being held at the Fire Service College.
- Delivered an online event called 'Challenges to Progression' attended by the Chief Constable from West Mercia Police and the Chief Fire Officer of West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.
- Reviewed Incident Ground Welfare Facilities.
- Involved in a schools' initiative, presenting a 'challenge' to be resolved, in liaison with Worcestershire County Council Careers Department to promote the modern firefighter role, with the added benefit of also promoting safety messages. The intention is to approach Herefordshire County Council Careers Department after a pilot in Worcestershire.

2023

Work planned for 2023, includes the following: -

- Being involved in the review of the Service's Menopause Guidance; the review will coincide with 3 menopause workshops that have been set up for women in the Service (almost 50 female staff requested to attend)
 - Involved in a review of the Maternity Policy
 - Reviewing flexible working arrangements on offer for female operational staff in particular
 - Actively supporting the inclusive recruitment initiatives planned as part of the 2023 wholetime recruitment process
7. The group has been influential in a wide range of work that cuts across a number of departments and many work areas, with a key driver being to create a more inclusive workplace and workforce. An important component of our 'People Strategy' is to 'recognize and demonstrate equality and diversity in our workforce and through our activities'.
 8. The work delivered by Women@HWFire supports and delivers against targets laid out in the 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 building upon the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.
 9. This work has been primarily driven by the Chair of the group, Station Commander Deb Davies, supported by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Kathryn Berry and a number of other key supervisory and middle managers. Therefore, I would like to place on record my thanks to all involved for driving our agenda forward and building a more inclusive environment for all staff, present and future.

Conclusion/Summary

10. The work delivered by Women@HWFire demonstrates our organisational commitment to supporting under-represented groups within HWFRS. The value it has added to multiple areas of work, and the influence it is having on 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 (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	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