

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 17 September 2019

Subject: Equalities Annual Progress Report 2018 - 19

Report by: Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Decision

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Combined Fire Authority's (CFA) approval for the draft Annual Equalities report for 2018 - 19.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the CFA
 - a) approve the draft Annual Equalities Report for 2018-19; and
 - b) note that a further report will be presented to the CFA at its meeting in December 2019.

Executive Summary

3. The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on all public authorities, including the CFA. The PSED requires all listed bodies to have due regard, in the exercise of their functions, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations across all nine protected characteristics (i.e. The General Duty).
4. Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, the CFA is required to produce and publish equality objectives and to report annually on how it is meeting the objectives. The CFA has opted to continue using the Equality Scheme as a means of outlining and publishing its equality objectives while using the Annual Equalities report to update on progress.

Background

5. The Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) implemented a new Single Equality Scheme in December 2017 outlining its equality objectives over a two-year period. The draft Annual Equalities report 2018 -19 is intended to provide an update on the progress made against the CFA's objectives as set out in the Equality Scheme 2018 -2020.

6. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection (and outcome) together with the changes to the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) has meant that some objectives, and in particular the objective to achieve the "Excellent" level against the FRSEF, cannot be met. Therefore, work is currently underway to revise and update the Equality Scheme. The revised Scheme will be presented to the CFA at its meeting in December 2019.

Workforce

7. It has always been the CFA's ambition to diversify the workforce by recruiting more women and people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. A wide range of activities to promote LFRS to members of the public, including those underrepresented in the workforce, continues to be a priority. These activities have the greatest impact on Wholetime recruitment. However, the reported recruitment data in this report excludes the new wholetime recruits who formally joined the Service in on the 1 April 2019. This data will form part of the 2019-20 annual report.
8. The CFA will also note that the recruitment profile for operational staff for this financial year is largely based on the On-Call duty system. This accounted for the majority of recruitment activities at LFRS and therefore, continues to have a significant impact on the ability to diversify the workforce.
9. The proportion of leavers who are either women or from a BAME background has also contributed to the challenge of diversifying the workforce. Women accounted for 17% across the service while those from a BAME background accounted for 8% across the Service. A new approach to Positive Action has been proposed to address greater interest in LFRS employment opportunities.
10. The ambition to diversify the workforce remains positive in some areas, compared to 2015, when LFRS published its previous Equality Scheme. Key highlights are:
 - i. The disability profile across the Service is up from 3.4% (in 2015) to 4.9% in 2019 and in operational roles it is up from 1.8% to 4.4% over the same period.
 - ii. The number of staff from a Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) background has also increased by over 100% since 2015 (from 1.2% to 2.4% in 2019).
 - iii. The workforce profile for women in operational roles has also seen an increase from 5.3% to 6.1% in 2019.
 - iv. The gender profiles in the control team reflects a positive gender balance by attracting more men.

However, for BAME there is a reduction from 6.3% to 5.4% over the same period. The limited recruitment opportunities in the wholetime roles, retirements together

with the demographics around the On-Call stations (predominantly white) has contributed to the fall in the proportion of BAME staff.

11. The proportion of staff declaring their equality monitoring information has also seen some significant progress in terms of disability, Faith and sexual orientation which were previously significantly under declared:
 - i. Over 81% of staff now declare their sexual orientation in 2019 while 57.8% did so in 2015.
 - ii. 78.6% of staff declared their disability status while in 2015 only 3.4% did so.
 - iii. In 2015 staff who declared their religion or faith (or lack of) accounted for 60.6% of the workforce. This has significantly improved to 82.7% in 2019.
12. The promotion profile continues to show that White British males are more likely to benefit from promotion opportunities at LFRS. This is because promotions occur, in a large proportion, within operational areas and therefore drawing from the existing workforce that has been in place for some time. The Service has invited staff within the organisation to support BAME and female staff through mentoring and coaching.
13. This year there were no cases of bullying and harassment cases investigated by the Service and this is a positive outcome when compared to the previous year when all cases of bullying and harassment involved BAME staff.
14. However, in terms of disciplinary cases, 8.3% of staff who were disciplined have declared a disability compared to 4.9% in the workforce. 16.7% of those disciplined were from a BAME background compared to 5.4% in the workforce. The Service will monitor cases of bullying and harassment, grievances and disciplinary and work with staff networks to ensure that there are no specific issues affecting groups of staff in the workforce.
15. The draft Annual Equalities report also provides details of the Gender Pay Gap Report that was submitted to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. The Gender Pay Gap analysis at LFRS, for March 2018, shows that on average female staff earn 20% (mean) less than the average male employee. Across the UK, men on average earned 17.9% (mean) more than women in April 2018 (Office for National Statistics). The Female Staff Network is exploring initiatives intended to increase female interest in operational firefighter roles as well as any promotion opportunities.

Service Delivery and equality monitoring

16. The Annual Equalities Report also provides equality monitoring data around satisfaction levels based on Fire Protection activities as well as the Service's

complaints and concerns procedure. There are no concerns for equality purposes in the satisfaction levels.

17. The After the Incident Survey indicated disproportionate satisfaction levels for respondents from BAME backgrounds when compared to the respondents who were White British. The proportion of people from a White British background indicating to be “very satisfied” was 97% compared to 86% of people from a BAME background. Over the last four years the satisfaction levels have been consistent, and the Service will closely monitor the satisfaction levels in order to establish if this is a one-off occurrence.
18. The equality scheme also outlined the CFA’s intentions to improve equality practices in how the Service monitors its community engagement activities. The Service has initiated a project to review and develop improvements in how it collects information, including equality monitoring information, when engaging with communities. This information will help the officers in understanding the engagement profile in the communities.

Report Implications / Impact

19. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The draft Annual Equalities Report 2018-19 will assist Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service in fully complying with its legal responsibilities. Non-compliance may result in the Equality and Human Rights Commission issuing a notice of non-compliance.

20. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

None arising.

21. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

Failure to produce and publish progress against equality objectives may lead to a significant risk of legal action against the service for failure to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

22. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

The positive outcomes of the progress outlined in this report are intended to positively impact on staff, service users and all stakeholders including those with protected characteristics. Good equality and inclusive practices contribute to the achievement of all our Service aims.

23. Environmental

None arising.

24. Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

Equality and diversity is central to good service provision and in promoting a positive working environment. Good equality and inclusive practices contribute to the achievement of all our Service aims. The Service will not only be complying with its legal obligations but will also be ensuring that “Staff are skilled, equipped and motivated to deliver its purpose” of “safer people, safer places”.

Background Papers

LFRS Equality Scheme 2018 – 20.

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/equality-scheme-2017.pdf>

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Gender Pay Gap Report 2018

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/gender-pay-gap-2018.pdf>

Appendix

Draft Annual Equalities Report 2018-19.

Officers to Contact

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