

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 16 December 2020

Subject: Equalities Annual Progress Report 2019 - 20

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: Deb Lee, Equality Diversity Inclusion and Safeguarding Officer

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 2019 - 20.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Combined Fire Authority approves the draft Annual Equalities Report for 2019-20.

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.
5. This report was scheduled to be presented at the previous CFA meeting, however due to staffing changes and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic it was delayed until this meeting.

Background

6. 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 2019 -20 is intended to provide an update on the progress made against the CFA's objectives as set out in the Equality Scheme 2018 - 2020.

7. The CFA was previously advised on 17 September 2019, that a number of changes were occurring within the sector following the first round of inspections completed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire Services (HMICFRS). This work has now concluded and resulted in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme 2020 – 2025. As such the draft report (attached at the Appendix) has been amended to incorporate this.

Workforce

8. 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.
9. It is pleasing to note the positive effects of this work on the profile of those recruited in 2019, recruiting a total of 59 new staff across all areas of the Service. This also includes the previous wholetime recruitment intake that joined the service on 1 April 2019:
 - i. 1.7% of new recruits declared a having a disability;
 - ii. 11.9% of new recruits declared as BAME;
 - iii. 33.9% of new recruits declared as female;
 - iv. 8.5% of new recruits declared as LGBT+; and
 - v. 50.1% of new recruits declared as ages between 25 – 35 years old.
10. Whilst improving, the overall diversity of the workforce is still some way off fully representing the community. This is mainly driven by the makeup of the wholetime workforce.
11. In the coming years LFRS is anticipating a significant turn over in the wholetime workforce due to a number of factors. Whilst in some respects this is challenging for the Service, in others, such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), it is a real opportunity to improve diversity. A number of work streams are already working on this and have received positive feedback from community engagement groups. This action includes:
 - i. Positive Action;
 - ii. Entry requirements for wholetime recruitment allow for maximum diversity of applicants;
 - iii. Change in recruitment for operational managerial posts (Internal and External applications to allow increased diversity); and
 - iv. Officers are adding further resources to the Equality team (2021) to promote internal ED+I matter and to continuously run positive action events.
12. Page 23 of the Appendix covers the number of Bullying, Harassment and Grievance cases reported to the service. These are grouped together in the report to ensure individual cases are not identifiable. This shows a total of 12 cases were reported to the service and covers a very broad age, gender and

religious belief range. From an ethnicity perspective only white British/Irish reported any cases to the Service.

13. The number of cases reported can be viewed in two ways. Of course, any case reported, investigated and upheld is a serious concern. However, it is encouraging to see that staff are comfortable in raising their concerns about the Service and the process that is followed.
14. The Appendix refers to the gender pay gap (Page 25 of the Appendix), this is reported and published separately. The gender pay gap within the service (23.8%) remains above the national average (18.4%) and is somewhat driven by the makeup of the operational service.

Service Delivery and equality monitoring

15. 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.
16. Each year the CFA undertakes an After the Incident Survey. The Survey informs the CFA about the quality of services offered to residents of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland after a domestic incident.
17. The Survey is undertaken through a questionnaire sent out to all households that accessed LFRS emergency response services. Those responsible in the household are asked a number of questions about their experiences of using LFRS services.
18. Equality monitoring information relating to age, disability, gender and ethnicity is collected as part of the survey and this forms the basis of this section of the report. In 2019/20 a total of 208 responses to the survey were received:
 - i. 45% involved a fire;
 - ii. 29% involved a 'Special Service' incident (e.g. animal rescue, flood, medical incident or gaining entry);
 - iii. 6% involved a false alarm;
 - iv. 2% involved a road traffic collision; and
 - v. 17% were classified as 'other' (e.g. triggered carbon monoxide alarms, fuel spillages etc.).
19. Overall, positive feedback was received in every section of the Survey and 100% of respondents (206) covering all EDI areas, expressed overall satisfaction with the service they received from LFRS.

Report Implications/Impact

20. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The draft Annual Equalities Report 2019-20 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.

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

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

22. 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.

23. 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 Service aims.

24. Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

25. Impact upon "Our Plan" Objectives

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is central to good service provision and in promoting a positive working environment. Good equality and inclusive practices contribute to the achievement of all 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>

Equalities Annual Progress report 2018/19 <https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/cfa-equalities-cover-report-2018-19.pdf>

Appendix

Equalities Annual Progress report 2019/20

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