

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 29th SEPTEMBER 2021
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION
AUTHOR: BENJI EVANS

SUBJECT: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
STRATEGY 2021-2024

Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks approval of the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024 ('The EDI Strategy').

Recommended: That

- [1] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024 be considered and approved.

Background

2. This is the Authority's fifth equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and highlights its strong and proud track record of championing the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, both within the fire and rescue sector and more widely.

Information

3. The EDI Strategy is a key corporate document, setting out the organisation's approach to EDI.
4. The new EDI Strategy references and sets out how the Authority will respond to a range of future challenges. Specifically it references the challenge of the Covid-19 Pandemic that has highlighted and entrenched many of the social disparities and health inequalities that exist in the UK. The EDI Strategy also touches on the lessons for our sector to learn from the Grenfell Tower tragedy, in which a disproportionate number of people from low income, ethnically diverse backgrounds lost their lives. And within the context of the landscape that we are operating in there is also reference to the intimidation of transgender people, and those who support them, showing how social media can amplify the voices of those who hold prejudiced opinions about those they view as 'different'.
5. The EDI Strategy outlines our intent to reflect on whether there is more we can do to keep underrepresented communities safe and carry on fighting their corner as visible allies. The EDI Strategy highlights roles and responsibilities and includes priorities that aim to help us further develop our approach to EDI.

6. The look and feel of the new EDI Strategy is different to the previous strategy and has been consciously designed to reflect the vibrancy and the energy that revolves around the Service's commitment to EDI. It is colourful and bold and contains clear messaging that has been distilled into 4 key themes to ensure that our intent is very clear.
7. The 4 themes of the new EDI Strategy are:
 - Our Organisation
 - Our People
 - Our Communities
 - Our Partners

The details relating to these themes can be found on pages 6-16 of the document.

8. Most importantly, at the centre of the new EDI Strategy is our Core Value ambition to **Be Inclusive**. Achievement of this objective will require on activity across the EDI themes and supporting principles.
9. Underpinning the delivery of the EDI Strategy will be an action plan that, as previously referenced, will be reviewed by the Equality Steering Group on a quarterly basis.
10. Once approved, the EDI Strategy will be monitored by the Performance and Overview Committee which receive updates twice a year and approves the annual equality monitoring report. Delivery against the EDI Strategy will also be monitored by the Equality Steering Group which meets on a quarterly basis with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive as senior sponsor and Chairperson.

Financial Implications

11. Costs associated with delivering the Strategy can be met from within the existing corporate equality and inclusion budget, including costs associated with any re-accreditation or outcomes of the recent HMICFRS inspection. Anything additional that is required in response to further workforce reform or any training requirements that may require funding, will be sourced through either the corporate training budget or if necessary via a future budget bid.

Legal Implications

12. The EDI Strategy outlines how the Fire Authority will fulfil the legal obligations which flow from the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation, including the additional general and specific requirements contained in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. The EDI Strategy clearly sets out how EDI issues will be managed and all relevant considerations have been taken into account to promote EDI. Equality analysis can be demonstrated through the comprehensive consultation that has been conducted in the development of the EDI Strategy where due regard has been shown for all nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The consultation process has also been complimented by the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.

Environmental Implications

14. There are no environmental issues arising from the production or delivery of the EDI Strategy.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
STRATEGY 2021-2024.**