

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND
PROTECTION SELECT COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2001 AT 10.30 A.M.

Agenda Item No.

7

**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RECRUITMENT
TARGETS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1. Purpose of Report

In response to the request of the Select Committee on 4 July 2001 for a report on the Fire and Rescue Service Equal Opportunities Recruitment Targets to enable scrutiny of the issue.

2. Summary

- 2.1 At the July Select Committee it was agreed to scrutinise the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the to the Fire Service Inspectorate's Equal Opportunities Targets that apply to recruitment of women and people from ethnic minorities.
- 2.2 The report provides an overview of Hertfordshire's performance in this area and highlights key issues affecting achievement of the targets.

3. Conclusion

The Select Committee is invited to indicate whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of this subject and / or make recommendations to the Cabinet or Chief Officer as appropriate.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Following a directive from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services and the Home Office Thematic Review into Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service during 1999, recruitment targets for women and people from ethnic minorities were set for the Service.
- 1.2 Previous levels of diversity within the Service prior to the commencement of positive action initiatives were low. For example, in 1998 the Service recorded just four women firefighters and only two firefighters from black and ethnic minorities.
- 1.3 The targets set for Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service were devised in two ways, those relating to women firefighters were given to the Service as a directive by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services. Those targets relating to black and ethnic minority firefighters were calculated by the Service using Census data.

Table 1: **Recruitment Targets for Women Firefighters**

| | 1 April 2002 | 1 April 2004 | 1 April 2009 |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| % of workforce | 4% (34) | 9% (76) | 15% (127) |

Table 2: **Recruitment Targets for Ethnic Minority Firefighters and Command and Control staff**

| | 1 April 2002 | 1 April 2004 | 1 April 2009 |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| % of workforce | 1.16% (10) | 1.9% (16) | 5% (43) |

(Indicates actual number of personnel)

- 1.3 To assist the Service, the Home Office undertook a number of key actions, including:-
- a) supporting three research projects to identify the views and perceptions of the job of a firefighter from women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds;
 - b) recommending that Fire Services move to continuous recruitment, and
 - c) recommending that the Fire Service adopt positive action programmes to raise awareness about their role and to encourage applications from under represented groups.
- 1.4 The Hertfordshire Service has adopted both these measures which are further supported by a series of innovative advertisements, based on the Home Office findings, which were designed to promote the positive action programme.
- 1.5 Looking to learn more about the communities we serve, the Service has become a key partner in a Government Home Office Race Equality initiative titled 'Connecting Communities'. The purpose of the grant funding is to assist the workforce of uniformed services to become more representative of their community. This aim is to foster community relationship to build trust and confidence in the Service thereby encouraging job applications. This bid for funding was made in partnership with Watford Race Equality Council and in July 2000 the Service was advised that the partnership had been awarded £345,000 over a 3-year period. The aim of this project funding is to build trust

and confidence between ethnic minority communities and the Service by promoting both employment in the Service and the Fire Service as a career to people from ethnic minority communities across the County.

1.6 The Service continues to take positive action to encourage interest and applications by women and people from ethnic minorities. These activities are aimed at both young people making career choices and those already in the labour market. Examples of activities to date include;

- Awareness days for people who are interested in finding out more about what a career in the Service involves.
- Workshops for women and people from ethnic minorities to receive targeted help in building their fitness and preparing for each of the elements of the recruitment process.
- Targeted Careers Fairs/Conventions aimed at women and people from ethnic minorities.
- Video footage to update careers information on a national Careers Information Database available in all Hertfordshire secondary schools.
- Advertising in local and national sector magazines aimed at young women, people from ethnic minorities, young people making careers choices and careers advisors.

2. Progress

2.1 The table below demonstrates the value of positive action, key initiatives and the progress made in increasing the numbers of applications from under-represented groups.

Table 3: Analysis of all firefighter applications and the outcomes
1 April 2000 to 31 August 2001

| Total Applied | Male | Female | White | Ethnic Minority |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 1732 (100%) | 1608 (93%) | 124 (7%) | 1660 (96%) | 72(4%) |
| | | | | |
| Total Successful | Male | Female | White | Ethnic Minority |
| 33 (1.9%) | 27(1.7%) | 6 (4.8%) | 32 (1.9%) | 1 (1.4%) |

2.2 Stage by stage analysis of applications indicates the following differences in performance between men and women:-

- Higher success rates for women at the shortlisting stage.
- Significantly higher failure rates for women at the fitness testing stage.
- Women have a 98% success rate at the interview stage.

2.3 With regard to differences in performance between white and ethnic minority applicants analysis indicates:-

- Comparable pass rates at all the stages between white and ethnic minority applicants.

2.4 Overall the Service has seen a steady increase in the number of women applicants compared to the previous year (124 from 93) and the same in the number of ethnic minority applicants compared to the previous year (72 from 57).

2.5 The current workforce profile in comparison to the 2002 targets is as follows;

Table 4: Women Firefighters

| Actual | 2002 Target | Variance |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1.7% (14) | 4% (34) | (2.3%) (20) |

Table 5: Ethnic Minority Staff in Uniformed Jobs

| Actual | 2002 Target | Variance |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1.16% (10) | 1.16% (10) | None /On Target |

3. Future Initiatives

3.1 The Service proposes to maintain its commitment to the positive action campaign as it appears to be encouraging an increase in applications from under-represented groups. These activities will be supplemented by the Service's active participation in the Connecting Communities Race Equality Project. This will further enhance the work being done to promote jobs in the Service to people from ethnic minorities and will hopefully boost the number of ethnic minority applicants to the proportions currently seen for women.

3.2 In order to improve the rate of successful applications, the Service will continue to provide advice and practical help to women and people from ethnic minorities to help them prepare themselves to make a successful application to the Service. For women, support will continue to be concentrated in the area of fitness, as this appears to be the area where applicants are most vulnerable to failure.

4. Financial Implications

Currently all initiatives for positive action are funded by the Service's Equality budget. The level of financial support allocated to this budget in the current financial year has allowed the Service to introduce a four year equality training strategy for all employees, which is dependent upon continual support.

The Service is currently awaiting further detailed information from Watford Race Equality Council regarding the projected spend of the Connecting Communities grant. However, the Service will seek, where possible, to utilize any available resources emerging from this initiative to benefit or complement the existing Service Equality budget.

5. Conclusion

Members are invited to review and comment on the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service against the Equal Opportunities Targets set by the Fire Service Inspectorate. The Select Committee may decide to undertake further scrutiny of this subject and / or make recommendations to the Cabinet or the Chief Officer.

Background papers used by the author in compiling this report

Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service – A Thematic Review. Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, Home Office September 1999

Equality Data supplied by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Personnel Department