

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2002 AT 10.30AM**

**UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS FOR THE  
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE FROM  
ETHNIC MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND A PROFILE OF THE NON-  
UNIFORMED WORKFORCE**

*Report of the Chief Fire Officer*

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**1. Purpose of Report**

To update Members on the progress the Fire Service has made against the recruitment targets for women and people from ethnic minority communities set by the Fire Service Inspectorate since the last report in March 2002.

**2. Summary**

The report provides details of the outcomes from the Spring 2002 recruitment campaign and includes comments about overall changes in the make up of the workforce since the last report. A profile of the non-uniformed workforce by gender, ethnicity and disability is included.

**3. Conclusion**

Members are invited to note the findings and progress made to date and endorse current positive action programmes.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 Members will be aware that 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. These targets have neither been endorsed nor changed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

#### **5. Progress Against Uniformed Targets**

- 5.1 The current workforce profile is based on 831 firefighters and 27 command and control staff;

<b>Women Firefighters</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>2002 Target</b>	<b>2004 Target</b>
% of workforce	1.7% (14)	4% (34)	9% (76)

<b>Ethnic Minority Staff</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>2002 Target</b>	<b>2004 Target</b>
% of Uniformed workforce	1.5% (13)	1.16% (10)	1.9% (16)

- 5.2 Since the last report the Service has undertaken activity to recruit firefighters and has maintained its commitment to positive action to encourage applications from women and people from ethnic minorities. An analysis of the campaign is in section 6 of the report. Although the Service successfully recruited one woman firefighter, she later voluntarily withdrew from the training squad. Consequently the overall number of women firefighters is at the same level as it was in October 2001 and the Service continues to be below its target.
- 5.3 However, since then last report in March 2002 the Service has increased the number of ethnic minority staff in uniformed jobs by two. The effect is to raise the proportion of ethnic minority staff from 1.28% to 1.5% which exceeds the current target. It is pleasing to note that the Service also reported an increase of 0.12% in the last report.

#### **6. Analysis of Recruitment Campaign**

- 6.1 In February 2002 the Service conducted a firefighter recruitment campaign to select suitable candidates for June and September 2002 training squads. A breakdown of the applications received with key findings about the performance of different groups of applicants during the process is outlined below.

### **Breakdown of applications from February 2002 campaign.**

<b>Total Applied</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority</b>
303 (100%)	286 (94%)	17 (6%)	291 (96%)	12 (4%)
<b>Total Successful</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority</b>
31 (100%)	30 (10.5%)*	1 (6%)*	27 (9%)*	4 (33%)*

\*These figures show the overall success rate for each group compared to the proportion that applied.

6.2 A comparison with the applicant profile and performance figures that were presented in October 2001 report indicates the following key findings:

- A 1% reduction in the proportion of women applicants in the February 2002 campaign compared to October 2001. A 1.2% increase in the proportion of women successfully completing the process and being offered jobs which contributes to a closing of the gap between men and women.
- No change in the proportion of ethnic minority applicants which remained at 4% in both campaigns. A 100% pass rate at shortlisting and a 32% increase in the proportion of ethnic minority applicants successfully completing the process and being offered jobs. This increase will continue to be monitored.
- Failure rates for women at the fitness and written test stage continue to be disappointing with twice as many women failing at the fitness and written stage than men in this campaign. There are comparable failure levels between white and ethnic minority candidates.

## **7. Positive Action examples:**

7.1 The Service continues to take positive action to encourage interest and applications to be firefighters from women and people from ethnic minorities. These activities are aimed at both young people making career choices and those already in 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 before considering applying to the Service.
- Workshops at Watford fire station 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.
- The inclusion of up-to-date careers information on the national Careers Information Database which is 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.

- 7.2 During 2002/03 the Service has been experimenting with a different approach to delivering awareness days. Key features of the approach being tested are the use of ongoing PR and the integration of information about the events into station based community fire safety work. In addition we have located the events in the larger towns.
- 7.3 With regard to supporting women to improve their performance in the fitness tests, initial exploratory work has been undertaken to assess the relative merits of the “access course” approach used by Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. Further investigation is planned to enable the Service to complete a cost benefit analysis of this model.
- 7.4 In addition the race equality ‘Connecting Communities’ project, in which the Service is a key partner is becoming important in informing the Service’s positive action work in ethnic minority communities. Through the project the Service has successfully recruited an ethnic minority member of staff as a non-uniformed community development worker to work with the Community Fire Safety teams. The Service is looking forward to receiving the project’s post consultation report with recommendations, which is due at the end of October 2002.

## **8. Profile of non-uniformed workforce**

- 8.1 The figures below profile the non-uniformed workforce at 20 September 2002.

<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Not Known</b>
124 (100%)	44 (35.5%)	80 (64.5%)	119 (96%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Disability</b>	<b>Without a disability</b>				
124 (100%)	3 (2.4%)	121 (97.6%)				

- 8.2 The Service is currently below target for the recruitment of people with disabilities. With colleagues from other departments the Service aims to continuously improve the promotion of vacant jobs to people with disabilities.

## **9. Future Plans**

- 9.1 The Service proposes to maintain its commitment to the positive action campaign whilst simultaneously identifying ways to enhance it. Further work will be undertaken to assess the benefits of the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service model, particularly in addressing the concern about women’s failure rate in fitness tests. The Service will evaluate the effectiveness of the approach it is piloting to awareness days and aim to identify success factors.
- 9.2 The Service will consider the recommendations from the Connecting Communities report when it is published.

- 9.3 In addition, via the County Equal Opportunities Strategy Group, the Service will work with the Recruitment Centre to find ways of encouraging people with disabilities to apply for vacant posts and to register themselves on the database.

**10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 Members are invited note the findings and progress made to date and endorse current positive action programmes.

**11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report as all positive action activities are contained within current budgets.

*Background information referred to by the author when compiling this report*

Report to Community Information and Protection Select Committee 12 March 2002  
Item 1.