

Women in the Fire Service
National Executive Committee
Held on 7 December 2022 via Zoom.

Attending: Jules King, Caroline Anderson, Miriam Heppell, Sara Slater, Kathryn Billing, Lyndsey Gymer, Jo Dawson, Caz Whiteman, Nicky Thurston, Hannah Lodder, Divine Zake, Jenny Nangle, Kasey Grainger, Vicky Wallens Hancock, Karla Stevenson, Paula Lyon, Lisa Howsden, Karen Smith, Nathalie Holden

1. Apologies: Dany Cotton, Nicola Lown, Jo Henry, Gina Gray, Sue Mallinson, Sara Hall, Lynsey McVay, Daisy Byron, Bex Sims, Louise Brown, Laura Mullins, Amy Croxton-Evans, Serena Benassi, Hannah Patchett, Claire Sedge, Selina Blaine

2. Notes of the last meeting held on 22 September 2022 -Agreed as a true record

3. Matters arising:

Information to be conveyed to SH on the Positive Action programme – completed

Women's Development Programme – encourage services to book onto the programmes

4. Gifts and Hospitality - None declared

5. Chair's Report

Welcome to our last meeting of 2022, it seems that this year has flown by and WFS continues to develop and grow and I wanted to pass on my heartfelt thanks to you all for everything that you do that helps make this organisation so special.

Karen has recently moved into an office after working from home for many years, which will certainly help with the work/home balance and hope you have settled in okay.

We have also employed another member of the team for a fixed term to help support Karen in the organising of the Training and Development event, which for those of you who are involved in the event management team or have helped at the event will appreciate how much this is needed. Kerry will be joining us on 3 January and lives close to the office and so they can both work in the same place.

You will all as individuals had your own reactions to the publishing of the LFB cultural report and I know that many of you will have had specific contacts from local and nation media, and I noticed that through our various communications channels some people wanted to share their experiences. We will no doubt continue to hear from others and have others reach out to us and indeed you may need to reach out to others yourself.

In response to the report we did put a statement on our social media platforms. For those who have not seen it I thought I would read it out here -

WFS continue to support and advise any Service that wants to improve their culture as our aim is to enable women to reach their full potential and to support gender equality. We are absolutely committed to create workplaces that are inclusive.

Whilst the report covers some of the most upsetting of accounts we have read around disgraceful behaviour, the majority of staff do not behave in this way. It is vital that this kind of behaviour is called out and dealt with in a robust manner and WFS will help and support any Fire & Rescue Service to do this.

WFS recognise that people may be affected by this report and we would encourage people to access support from their services wellbeing provisions.

This Friday is the excellence in fire awards in London and I am delighted to be attending along with others from WFS. This year we have sponsored an award - the most influential LGBTQ+ person in fire and we also have two people who have been shortlisted for awards - Caz Whiteman and Kath Billing - good luck to them both.

Finally, I do hope that you all manage to get some time away from work over the festive period and spend some quality time to those who mean the most to you.

6. Treasurer's Report

Sara Slater, Treasurer gave an update for the financial year.

Accounts ending 30 April 2022 are with the Accountant to be finalised. Draft accounts will be presented to the Directors at their meeting on 15 December for approval.

For this current year we have 30 April, WFS in a much better position. Some outstanding invoices to be settled from the Training and Development Event. Bank Balance looking healthy with £91,000. Expecting higher expenditure with a new employee about to start. Difference between this year and last is the Women's Development Programme and Training and Development Event and just finalising the financial position. Debtors of £20,000 for the Training and Development and approximately £3,000 for the Women's Development Programme.

The accounts will be circulated after approval from the Directors.

All corporate membership renewal invoices sent out. New corporate Members: Norfolk FRS

7. Regional reports

Jo Dawson presented reports on Derbyshire FRS on behalf of Bex Sims and Nottinghamshire:

Derbyshire

Five women will be attending the next Women's Development Programme and the service is looking to support up to 5 places on each course in future (if there is the interest). We're also trying to get ahead of ourselves with interest for the Training and Development weekend.

On Friday we have quite a few nominees attending the Excellence in Fire Awards including SM Julia Smith for the Most Influential Woman in Fire category so good luck Jules!

I'm trying to get info on the next recruits course starting in Jan, so I'll text that info across if I get it in time.

Derbyshire have recently had their netball match.

Nottinghamshire:

The LFB Culture report has prompted a good response from our Chief and he is keen to get feedback from networks and is having a 'summit' meeting with us as leads in the new year. Prior to the report publication he had already done some work around having an 'open' chair policy for network leads at senior leadership team meetings. This is a work in progress but should begin in January. NFRS is currently recruiting for whole-time FFs, interviews happening at the moment with one course due to start in April. An On Call course starts in January. There is still lots of positive talk around the training and development weekend and I am looking to get early financial commitment for the 2023 event. We held our first netball match against Derbyshire and also competed in the inaugural football tournament in Manchester. These sporting events have led to more participation in network activities from newer ops staff which is positive. We celebrated the first birthday of the network with a training event around getting out of your comfort zone. Participants brought children along to make it easier to attend, we had Michelle Hickmott as keynote speaker who was awesome and workshops.

Essex County FRS - Lynsey Gymer

Nicole is stepping down from her role as a Local Rep and I will be taking over from January. My job now is to meet with Nicole and members of our SLT, finance and communications to see how I can best help and move WFS forward within our Service.

I've had a look and we are just awaiting approval from the SLT for the renewal fee, so that should be actioned shortly, but will chase up via email this afternoon, and will double check we have funding for the training and development weekend (I believe 5 spaces but need to confirm)

We are currently recruiting both whole time and on-call firefighters and have been doing Q&A sessions with serving firefighters via a series of team's meetings for potential applicants to ask us questions. The uptake of women on these has been brilliant. We have done female only sessions, mixed sessions and BAME sessions and the women involved have had perceived barriers broken down.

I saw a slide at the beginning of the meeting with the upcoming dates for meetings for next year, is it possible to have a copy of the proposed NEC meetings dates so I can make sure they are in the diary in case I'm on shift and need to be detached?

Scotland - Karla Stevenson

Highland – Station Commander for Isle of Sky managed to bring a fire skills course for the first time ever where children can do a week long course and many girls signed up, another two courses to run as it was oversubscribed. Broke down barriers and parents attended a pass out parade. Was really empowering for girls.

Heavily involved with on call stuff and spreading the word of WFS. Now have good links with corporate communications and corporate skills development team, information from WFS being fed into staff networks. Working well and getting a much more diverse attendance especially from on call.

Stations to sign up to 'breastfeeding Scotland scheme' having a welcoming inclusive environment signed all stations up, no need for facilities, saying its more about attitudes and inclusion. No need for a room, just accepting anyone is welcome breastfeed at the station.

Signed new MOU nothing in it adhering to partner to standards, diversity inclusion. Will revisit and make sure adhere to standards and share values.

Presented to Scottish Ambulance service, 72 course higher than normal of women attending. Next year trying to get more events in person/virtual. Developing a lot more online.

Lastly promotion process completed for this year with one woman passed Area Manager, no woman passed the Group Commander process, four passing Station Commander. Looking to see why those numbers are so low.

Cornwall - Kath Billing: great to hear about the incredible amount of work going on. KB and VWH reflecting on Cornwall and how they have moved through the roles and levels of the organisations. Very noticeable change with the On call recruitment over the last 18 months with huge amount of women joining, also with the on call events to the extent of more women than men on recruits courses.

Marketing and Communications update –Nathalie Holden

Snowdon trip: arranged by Daisy Byron. Would love to do a news article so looking for quotes and photos from anyone taking part.

Awards: Three categories available still to sponsor, 10 entries so far with closing date on 1 February. Secured two sponsors out of the five awards. Encourage colleagues to forward information into services to consider sponsoring. JK encouraged committee to consider nominating, have a look at people around you as lots of people doing so much in their services.

WFS Futures: new name for the Future Firefighter positive action starting in January 2023. No longer programme of 6 sessions consecutively. Sara Hall and Michelle Hickmott present stand-alone sessions every 2 months on a Wednesday Evening at 7 pm. Waiting list from the previously positive action.

Podcasts: will be based on our online events where we are delivering new content.

Women's Development Programme: dates out now for the next three programmes. Not available for booking yet. The next programme will start on 8th February which is available currently for booking, 12 places left. PL received really positive feedback on the WDP and hoping to send more from GMFRS.

Twitter: still remaining active on Twitter despite the difficulties as this is where we have our biggest following. Consider following other WFS social media platforms.

Coaching and mentoring NFCC portal: Pool of trained coaches. JK registered as a coach and currently coaching someone. If anyone interested in registering as a coach or wanting a coach/mentor go onto NFCC website. Please consider putting yourself forward as a coach.

8. Policies

Retention Policy: no changes required, policy to remain the same. Query on one set of documents which MH will look into.

Privacy Policy: linked to GDPR – no legislation changes so all remains the same.

Recommendation from MH to continue with present policies. All Agreed and approved by the committee.

All policies available on the WFS website.

9. Training and Development Event update:

CA gave an update on the Training and Development Event. Events Management Team have met several times and planning going well.

Theme: considering Strive and Thrive.

- Bringing forward opening of event to 11.00 am to try to make the afternoon run smoother.
- Keynote speaker - Captain Jennifer Stephenson.
- Delegate fee still to be agreed. Staying with Eventbrite.
- Book a DJ and trying for the Samba Band.
- Icebreaker to be run by Sara Hall.
- Already secured a huge amount of workshops with some still to follow up.
- Stands: IFE, Elemental, Walk and Talk 999. Agreed British FF Challenge to have a stand.
- Shelley Robinson to attend again with the wellbeing dogs.
- Bookings to open on 28th February/Closing date 1st May
- Committee asked by Chair to promote the event. Be aware some services will have less funding for 2023.
- NH asked to circulate the facts and figures on the Training and Developments events produced by Cheryl Rolph, which is to provide the information to help build a case for sending delegates.

10. WFS annual plan: Redrafted and will be sent out and uploaded on our website when finalised.

11. Any Other Business:

JK invite if anyone wants to find out more about the Directors meeting. JN interested, succession planning and if anyone wants to get more involved.