

## **Women in the Fire Service**

### **National Executive Committee**

**held on Tuesday, 5 December 2023 via Teams**

#### Attending:

Jules King (JK), Chair

Karla Stevenson (KSt), Co-opted Member

Bex Sims (BS), RR East Midlands

Beth Barton (BB), LR South Wales FRS

Jo Dawson (JL), LR Nottinghamshire FRS

Georgina Connor (JC), LR Jersey FRS

Caroline Ingleby-Bostock (CIB), LR Warwickshire

Natalie Parkinson (NP), LR Humberside FRS

Karen Smith (KS), WFS Administration Manager

Emma Smith (ES), WFS Marketing and Communications Officer

Kerry Cassidy (KC), WFS Administrative Assistant

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from: Amy Beams, Caroline Anderson, Dany Cotton, Divine Zake, Elizabeth Curtis, Hannah Lodder, Jan Morris, Jo Henry, Kathryn Billing, Lynsey McVay, Nicky Thurston, Sara Slater, Sue Mallinson.

#### **2. Notes of last meeting held on 25 October 2023**

Update to the notes. Bex Sims to be included in the apologies and East Midlands Regional Report was added to section 7. These were presented and agreed as a true record.

#### **3. Matters arising**

The NFCC Power Point was forwarded to the NEC after the meeting.

Jo Hardy has confirmed with JK the NFCC will review a menopause policy.

#### **4. WFS Gifts and Hospitality – declarations**

In conjunction with the Fire Awards sponsorship, WFS were provided with two tickets to attend.

#### **5. Chair's report**

It continues to be a busy time for WFS and since our last meeting the planning for the training and development event continues to grow and take shape. All services have been sent a letter that you should have all seen a draft of which outlines our commitment to prioritise delegate sand we are asking services to indicate their potential number of delegates they can support and at the same time advising that we may not be able to accommodate all people's needs.

You will no doubt have seen in the news the continuation of the culture in the FRS being highlighted with the outcome of a court case finding in favour of a former female firefighter. There have also been some further HMICFRS reports published and there are no surprises that the culture features heavily in the narratives. I recognise that this sustained period of time with the culture of the FRS being highlighted may well trigger thoughts of our own lived experience and I wanted to encourage everyone to please reach out and talk if you have been affected, we are here for everyone.

If I now move onto more positive news, at the last meeting I updated the meeting that WFS had sponsored the Young Person of the Year category at this year's excellence in fire awards that took place last Friday in London and as a result some of the team were invited to attend the awards ceremony. WFS were also short listed in two categories, Training provider of the year and also Team of the year. I am delighted to say that WFS won the team of the year award which is a great honour, and I was delighted that some of the team could be there to accept the award. There were also nominations for Caz Whiteman for most influential LGBT champion of the year and Jo Dawson was short listed as most influential woman in fire. I am delighted to say that Kath Billing was also short listed for most influential woman of the year and was the winner. Kath could not be there in person and so Amy Beams collected the award on her behalf. All in all, an amazing experience for us all and a great recognition for us all who are involved in WFS.

Ordinary people doing extraordinary things, such a proud time to be a part of this great organisation.

## **6. Treasurer's report**

On behalf of the WFS Treasurer, Sara Slate, JK presented the financial statement as at 15 November, as follows:

Closing cash book balance: £6,371.00

Closing cash book reserves balance: £100,902.00

As of 15 November 2023 the amount of money owed to WFS from events and sponsorship is £6,364.00.

The Reserves account shows a healthy balance to ensure in the event of any circumstances that may change with the governance, there is sufficient to keep WFS going for another 12 months.

## **7. Regional reports**

### **7.1 Bex Sims – Derbyshire FRS**

Looking at Women's Development Programme, Derbyshire have supported five people on each course and have a waiting list for the 8<sup>th</sup> Programme in February 2024.

DFRS are asking delegates who have attended to reflect – with a get-together where they bring the workbooks. Want to continue with a support network, and keep thinking about progress and development.

One Female promoted to Watch Manager which totals four women in Derbyshire now. However, sadly losing a Station Manager through retirement. Planning for IWD 2024 although still to decide on how. Already talking to about delegates for Training and Development Event in June.

### **7.2 Karla Stevenson – Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

Scottish Government have done a spending review and need to make £36 million cuts over the next 4 years. Karla was approached as they are scrutinising every membership but happy to report will continue with WFS corporate membership and hope to have much more engagement.

Local group commander promotion process Karla working with the team and process revamped.

23 people got through interview stage, 3 are women

Battling with communication, managed to get Draeger event which has opened eyes to WFS and Scotland now looking at holding an event in 2024. Will also be definitely having places at the Training and Development Event, and will send out to individually to women.

Notification has been sent out on their new communication system on the Awards.

JK offered as much support as possible for an event

### **7.3 Jo Dawson – Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Women's network going strong, 40 attended last meeting. Jo has stood down from the Network but it's going really well. Looking to get people more engaging so may consider holding coffee sessions.

Engaging with NFCC, and sent some people to the Menopause session. NFRS has become White ribbon accredited association born from the women's network. A toy collection was done for Christmas from all stations which was very successful.

Currently recruiting whole time Firefighters of which 10% are applications from women.

A 10-year development plan on how to improve workforce in diversity showed if we keep doing what we are doing, will not reach community until 2069, therefore a need to do something different.

### **7.4 Georgina Connor – States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service**

GC talked about how it can feel quite lonely, and how hard this year has been returning to work from maternity with still no maternity policy. Just starting menopause policy. In April, Jersey, another woman will be joining Jersey from LFB who will be a great addition to their service. A recent meeting highlighted how often the term 'fire men' was mentioned. A male colleague became aware of this and spoke to GC after the meeting as had not really noticed this previously.

JK wanted GC to know that WFS were there to support her and if there was anything we could do to help to let us know. Also suggestion to look on the NFCC website at model policies. JK also mentioned the power of male allies and how important this is for women, so it's not just women challenging. Change takes time.

## **8. Marketing and Communications update**

The 2024 Awards launched, categories information on website. We have received our first sponsor, NFCC and in conversations with other sponsors. There are nine awards in total and this is the 5<sup>th</sup> year of awards. All are encouraged to look on the website to read about awards. We are already receiving nominations and the closing date is 1<sup>st</sup> March.

The NEC are asked to promote and encourage nominations. If any suggestions for sponsors, please let Emma know. There is a sponsorship package available which will be circulated.

**Action point ES**

Last newsletter of the year going out and has lots of content.

ES emphasised what a great day the Fire Awards was and how unexpected it was to receive the Team of the Year. Never attended anything like that before and it was a great opportunity. JK and ES, did interview at the Fire Awards, short piece on the reason why WFS sponsored an award, Youth Champion and how it felt to be shortlisted.

Looking to push individual membership and working on ways to promote with a marketing campaign.

JK asked NEC to consider nominating someone for the awards. Women aren't very good at promoting themselves, ordinary people do extraordinary things.

## **9. WFS Event updates**

### **9.1 Women's Development Programme**

The 7<sup>th</sup> WDP running now with the 8<sup>th</sup> programme following on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 with 10 places already booked on Eventbrite. The maximum number of places is 30 and ES will continue to promote.

**Action Point ES**

KS liaising with project manager, looking to add an additional 4 more programmes in 2024/2025. This will allow time to review the contract, need for more programmes and consider putting out to tender.

**Action Point KS**

### **9.2 Training and Development Event**

KS provided an update on planning the for the June event;

Letters have been sent out to CFOs asking for number of delegates they wish to fund, and receiving responses. Deadline is 11 December. Also provided additional options for delegates to attend with a camper van, staying off-site and Saturday only. NEC felt it was a great idea to email reps about letter to CFOs, letter was really clear on what would services like and what to expect. Important to include reps as conduit to the services.

The theme/strap line will be 'Be the Change'

Sara has looked at fees for additional for these options, still to be reviewed by the Events Management Team.

Entertainment -looking into a silent disco

Programme change – awards will now be on the Saturday night to make it more memorable evening for recipients.

In the process of working through workshops and still looking for suggestions.

Volunteers - Will need to reduce the number of WFS team, although we do want to encourage new members coming as a volunteers. We want to keep consistency of the experience, being honest with people but may be some people who are disappointed and not able to join this year.

## **10. Any Other Business**

### **10.1 Corporate Membership**

KS informed the committee that all the Corporate Membership renewal invoices have been sent out.

### **10.2 NFCC Fire Fit Conference**

WFS sponsored 1 delegate to attend the NFCC Fire Fit Conference on 20/21 November 2023. Feedback was requested and JK suggested offering the opportunity to come to next meeting to give feedback and provide a newsletter article.

### **10.3 Firefighter Cancer Responder Conference – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

WFS received offer of four tickets to attend the Firefighter Cancer Responder Conference run by John Lord and all places filled.

### **10.4 Attendance as new member**

Caroline Ingleby-Bostock reflected on attending first meeting, enormous help. Just starting up and until unable to get WFS off the ground in Warwickshire. Drawing from everyone else's experience which is really helpful. JK suggests reaching out and also be part of the social media groups

## **11.Dates for meeting in 2024:**

- 29 February 2024
- 17 April 2024
- 25 September 2024
- 27 November 2024

### **11.1 Additional dates for diaries:**

- Training and Development – 7-9 June 2024
- Emergency Services Show – 18/19 September 2024