

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JULY 2012

1. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2012–2015**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Equality and Diversity Report and Objectives (attached as Appendix A) which responds to the statutory requirements as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty, under the Equality Act 2010 be referred to the Authority for approval at its next meeting.
- 1.2 THAT the Scrutiny Committee supports, directs and monitors the progress of the service against the Equality Objectives set out below.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report was referred to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration by the Executive Committee in June 2012. The Executive Committee noted the report. The report outlines the Service's achievements with regard to current equality and diversity issues and challenges as well as its objectives for 2012-2015.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet the needs of different people¹.

• ¹ [Public sector: quick start guide to the specific duties \(PDF file - 242kb\)](#)

3.2 Under the Public Sector Duties of the Equality Act 2010; the Authority is required to meet its General Equality Duty:

To have due regard to:

- i. *eliminate unlawful discrimination*, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- ii. *advance equality of opportunity* between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- iii. *foster good relations* between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.3 The Equality Act 2010, Specific Duties Regulations 2011, came into force on 10 September 2011.

3.4 The specific duties help public bodies perform the Equality Duty better. They do this by requiring public bodies to be transparent about how they are responding to the Equality Duty – requiring them to publish relevant, proportionate information showing compliance with the Equality Duty, and to set equality objectives.

3.5 Both the equality information and the equality objectives must be published in a manner that is accessible to the public such as through a website, hard copies and in different formats.

3.6 Also and in particular the information published must include:

3.6.1 information relating to employees who share protected characteristics (for public bodies with 150 or more employees); and

3.6.2 information relating to people who are affected by the public body's policies and practices who share protected characteristics (for example, service users).

3.7 In responding to the requirements of the Act we have also considered the guidance provided by the Government Equalities Office as well as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, non-statutory guidance.

- 3.8 The report details examples of the excellent work the Service has done to promote equality and diversity within the Service and within the community. We celebrate our success by acknowledging the four national awards we have received recognising our progress.
- 3.9 We are also required to have a transparent approach with regards to areas of our work that require further improvements with particular regard to each of the protected characteristics.
- 3.10 This includes reporting on a range of performance indicators such as workforce profiles, progression, and implementation of policies and community engagement. With this in mind, the report outlines the challenges and the successes we have had with regard to the profile of our workforce.
- 3.11 The Service is making efficiency savings and is only recruiting in exceptional circumstances, therefore the inclusion agenda becomes a vital concept within the heart of our equality and diversity approach.
- 3.12 The Service has further committed to achieving the 'Excellence' level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework. The chapters of the report therefore align themselves to the five key areas of assessment, these being:
- *Accountability*
 - *Leadership and Promoting Inclusion*
 - *Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement*
 - *Employment and Training*
 - *Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice*
- 3.13 At the end of reporting our current progress with regard to each of these areas, the report then outlines some key high level objectives for us to progress with equality and diversity; these are summarised at the end of this report.
- 3.14 These objectives also take into consideration the actions needed to achieve 'excellence' in line with the FRS Equality Framework.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This report and the equality objectives within it respond directly to the general and specific duties of the Equality Act and considers the equality and diversity issues that are pertinent to the needs of the Service. In doing so a range of equality analysis has been considered with regard to all the protected characteristics.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report responds to our requirements under the Equality Act 2010; Public Sector Equality Duties 2011. The Equality Objectives 2012–2015 further advance our compliance with the General Duty and Specific Duties. The objectives also support the organisation with better response to employment and service delivery legislative requirements.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of producing the Equality and Diversity report and objectives for 2012-2015 would be accommodated within the existing budget provision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Quick Start Guide: Public Sector Equality Duty
Quick Start Guide: Specific duties
The essential guide to the public sector Equality Duty
Meeting the Equality Duty in policy and decision-making
Engagement and the Equality Duty
Equality objectives and the Equality Duty
Equality information and the Equality Duty
Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service Annual Equality Report

VIJITH RANDENIYA
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES 2012 - 2015

ACCOUNTABILITY

The journey towards achieving excellence requires us to challenge ourselves and continuously improve. We recognise that inclusion strategies will form a key dimension to the equality and diversity agenda as we move forward. Some of our key specific and measurable equality objectives that promote accountability at all levels of the Service include:

1. Our *strategic direction and drive* will continue to be given through our Authority and Corporate Board members. They will also monitor progress and provide scrutiny on our equality and diversity performance *through equality analysis* such as through quarterly reports and equality impact assessments. We shall continue to have an Equality and Diversity Lead Member on the Authority who will champion E&D issues at a strategic level.
2. Managers will lead in *identifying and embedding* equality and diversity actions into their local directorate/section plans and all employees will identify and promote relevant equality and diversity principles and actions within their work accordingly.

LEADERSHIP & INCLUSION

Attributes of leadership can be displayed at all levels; each and every person within the service is encouraged to promote equality and diversity which is reflected in our commitment to our core values in all that we do.

1. Authority and Corporate Board members will continue to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity through leadership actions and personal impact.
2. The Authority continues to profile and provide the support and resources required to deliver equality and diversity improvements.

SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENGAGEMENT

The service is committed to using the appropriate and varied prevention, protection and response activities to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

Prevention & Protection Activities

1. Our local plans demonstrate the sophisticated way in which we use our intelligence data and risk mapping within the context of understanding the changing nature of who our communities are and the environment that they live in. We use this information to achieve better outcomes in our prevention, protection and response work. We will publish our local plans to communicate with residents and demonstrate our commitment to and understanding of the needs of our communities and set our accountability towards continuous improvement. In particular, by identifying 20% of the most 'at risk groups' with regard to home fires, road safety, personal safety and community safety and target our resources to make these communities safer.
2. We will continue to raise the awareness of our communities towards managing safety through a range of interventions and educational activities that promote community cohesion; such as through publicity, open days, schools visits, youth work, Safeside and local station level activities.

Response

1. We will be well prepared at all times and respond to all emergency response situations with the highest level of expertise, skills and abilities to reduce the risk of fires, road traffic incidents, injury and death.
2. We will ensure that our enforcement activities do not disproportionately impact any specific communities without reasonable justification. Where possible, where trends are identified we will make efforts to advise and provide guidance so that these communities be more proactive in responding to the requirements of the law.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

1. We will ensure that we tackle any barriers to communication development, inclusion and progression.
2. We will ensure that all of our employees are treated with dignity and respect at all levels regardless of their differences.

3. We will promote positive action initiatives to specifically engage employees from under representative groups to engage with organisational development as well as their own development.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Monitoring, evaluation, sharing good practice and ensuring the best use of resources are the key to our aspiration of achieving and sustaining excellence in equality and diversity for our employees and our communities.

1. We will assess the effectiveness of our partnership work in achieving equality outcomes.