

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012**

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

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee approves the report (attached as appendix A) which responds to our statutory requirements as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty, under the Equality Act 2010.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to seek approval for the Equality and Diversity 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 people<sup>1</sup>.
- 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;

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

- 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, 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 (with Chief Fire Officer approval); 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.
- 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 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

VIJ RANDENIYA  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER