

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006**

**1. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 THAT the Authority notes the Consultation Strategy used to seek views about the Race Equality Scheme (RES) attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 THAT the Authority notes the consultation comments received and the proposed responses to those comments, set out in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 1.3 THAT the Authority approves the revised Race Equality Scheme (RES) which is to follow.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to seek the Authority's approval to the revised Race Equality Scheme to cover the next three year period in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a general duty on all specified public authorities, which include fire and rescue authorities, to promote race equality. This includes a specific duty to produce an RES and an employment duty to monitor employment practices by reference to racial groups. The results of this monitoring must be published annually. To help fulfil this duty, the Authority published its first Race Equality Scheme in 2002.
- 3.2 Sections 2(2) and (3) of the Race Relations Act (Statutory Duties Order 2001) say:

*"A Race Equality Scheme shall state in particular –*

- (a) *those of its functions and policies, or proposed policies, which that person has assessed as relevant to its performance duty imposed by Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act; and*
- (b) *that person's arrangements for:*
  - (i) *assessing and consulting on the likely impact on the promotion of race equality;*
  - (ii) *monitoring its policies for any adverse impact on promotion of race equality;*
  - (iii) *publishing the results of such assessments and consultation as are mentioned in sub paragraph (i) and such monitoring as is mentioned in sub paragraph (ii);*
  - (iv) *ensuring public access to information and services which it provides; and;*
  - (v) *training staff in connection with the duties imposed by Section 71(i) of the Race Relations Act and this Order.*
- (c) *such a person shall, within a period of three years from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2002 and within each further period of three years, review the assessment referred to in paragraph (a)."*

3.3 Members may recall that arising from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process, it was recognised that in spite of the overall "Good" rating, Equality and Diversity was an area where the Authority needed to show improvement. Members may also recall the recent independent review by the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) which similarly identified the need to refocus our efforts in this area.

3.4 In June 2006, the Authority received a letter from the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) indicating that it should have revised its Race Equality Scheme in 2005 and must publish a fully compliant scheme within three months of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

3.5 Renewal of the Race Equality Scheme had already been included in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for the current year. Therefore, a letter was sent to the CRE with a detailed Action Plan, setting out how the Authority intended to address the CRE's concerns.

- 3.6 A draft RES was produced and circulated for consultation at the beginning of August. The consultation strategy used is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A summary of all the consultation replies and the proposed response to the comments is attached as Appendix 2 to the report. The comments have helped to shape the final draft of the updated RES. All Members have already received an earlier draft copy of the RES as part of the consultation process. The final draft of the document will be sent to Members prior to the Authority meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September and will incorporate a range of consultation comments.

#### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the RES, a copy of which has been placed on the Authority's website, [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)

#### 5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a general duty on all specified public authorities, which include Fire and Rescue Authorities, to promote race equality.

#### 6. **TRADE UNION CONSULTATION**

All the Trade Unions recognised by the Authority have been specific consultees and part of the development of the Race Equality Scheme including members of the Black and Minority Ethnic Section of the Fire Brigades' Union.

#### 7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of printing the Race Equality Scheme booklet and a four page Executive Summary is approximately £4,500 and can be met from within existing budgets.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Race Equality Files  
Equality Impact Assessment Files

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**CONSULTATION STRATEGY FOR THE RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

**The Consultation Strategy**

This strategy seeks to engage communities in an ongoing dialogue, to increase their knowledge and expectations of the Fire Service and to build their capacity to become effective consultees in the process.

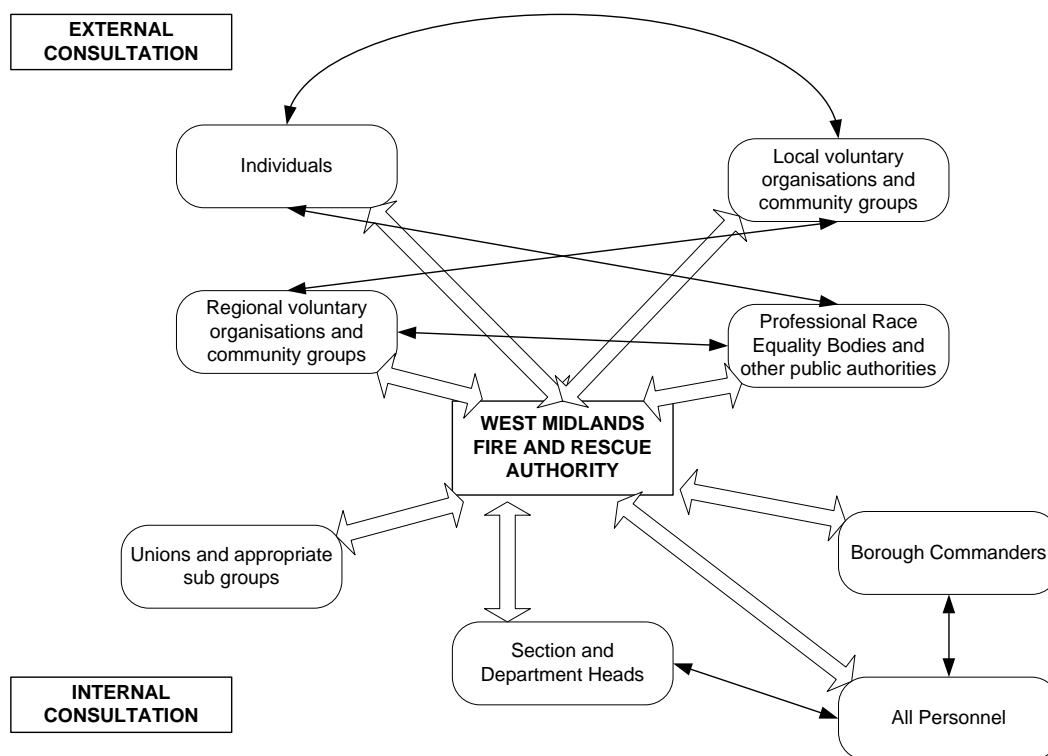
In developing this strategy, it is envisaged that communities will be able to play a far more effective role within any partnership and be available for feedback and revisions to the Race Equality Scheme's Action Plan designed to meet their particular needs.

This process will:

- Develop a long term, coherent and structured method of informing and being informed by Black and ethnic minority communities.
- Involve communities in shaping agendas as opposed to just commenting on them.
- Develop a pool of skilled, articulate and networked community organisations and representatives drawn from a variety of areas.
- Develop a real partnership between the Fire Service and Black and minority ethnic communities.

## **The Consultation Model for the Race Equality Scheme**

Figure One: Consultation Model for the Race Equality Scheme



### **Methodology**

Consultation will begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2006 and run for 4 weeks until the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006.

Primarily, we will direct consultees to our online services, with the full document and information available to download from our corporate website and Intranet services.

- The Race Equality Scheme will be available on the Brigade's Website and Intranet.
- Be laid out to be DDA compliant.
- Offer a variety of contact methods including post, telephone, e-mail.
- Offer availability of the document in other formats and translations; 14 language options will be offered.

Promotion will need to be undertaken by via the media, with a press release issued on launch of consultation, and a 'front' person to promote it to the media. This should also target ethnic media and community press and websites.

- All consultation responses will be acknowledged.
- Specific questions will receive a clarification response.
- Generally, the consultation response approach will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Commission for Race Equality.

### **Consultation will consist of the following elements:**

#### **External Consultation**

Principal consultees in this process need to be the professional race equality bodies. There are six Race Equality Councils (RECs) in the West Midlands area and the Regional Headquarters of the Commission for Racial Equality. Clearly these organisations have a role to play in both the development and scrutiny of the Race Equality Schemes and are skilled in the area of race equality work.

They are also important in the dissemination of information and can provide effective access to Black and minority ethnic communities and groups. Many of these groups are in regular dialogue with the RECs and, as such, will maximise the benefits of setting up early dialogues with particular communities and groups.

There will be a number of community organisations and groups that do not have contact with RECs and these will be mapped and as many as possible will be contacted individually and invited to join in the consultation.

Both of the above strategies will work towards developing individual relationships with both communities and groups which are sustained over the lifetime of the Scheme and beyond. The process will also look to build the capacity of Black and minority ethnic communities and groups to effectively consult with the Fire Service. Information will be provided in an appropriate and accessible way, i.e. in different languages.

Key individuals will be identified who may also have a fundamental contribution to make. The information regarding these key individuals will be provided by our Borough Commanders to ensure we are consulting with their partners in the communities that they work in.

Public authority partnerships also exist which can support the dissemination of good practice and can be used to develop, compare and scrutinise the Scheme and examine the benefits of joint working in some areas.

### **Externally –**

- Via our corporate website ([www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)).
- Advertising on targeted websites for ethnic minority newsgroups. Proposal to purchase banner adverts, redirecting to our website. Summary content/press release may be required):
- Ethnic Media Group (all the following websites:) Side Banner advert for 1 month
  - New Nation ([www.newnation.co.uk](http://www.newnation.co.uk))
  - Caribbean Times ([www.caribbeantimes.co.uk](http://www.caribbeantimes.co.uk))
  - Eastern Eye ([www.easterneyeonline.co.uk](http://www.easterneyeonline.co.uk))
  - Asian Times ([www.asiantimesonlin.co.uk](http://www.asiantimesonlin.co.uk))
  - India Weekly ([www.indiaweekly.co.uk](http://www.indiaweekly.co.uk))
  - Bangladesh Weekly ([www.bangladeshweekly.co.uk](http://www.bangladeshweekly.co.uk))
  - Pakistan Weekly ([www.pakistanweekly.co.uk](http://www.pakistanweekly.co.uk))
  - Sri Lanka Weekly ([www.srilankaweekly.co.uk](http://www.srilankaweekly.co.uk))
- VoiceOnline website – side banner advert for 1 month ([www.voice-online.co.uk](http://www.voice-online.co.uk))
- Muslim Directory website – banner for 1 month ([www.muslimdirectory.co.uk](http://www.muslimdirectory.co.uk))
- Clickwalla website – button for 1 month ([www.clickwalla.com](http://www.clickwalla.com)) and ([www.worksfm.com](http://www.worksfm.com))
- Banner advert to run on:
  - IcBirmingham.co.uk
  - IcCoventry.co.uk
  - IcSolihull.co.uk
  - IcWalsall.co.uk
  - IcWolverhampton.co.uk
  - IcSuttonColdfield.co.uk

For 1 month (55,000 page impressions split between 30,000 for IcBirmingham, 15,000 for IcCoventry and 10,000 across the smaller sites).

Copies have been sent to all West Midlands constituency MPs.

## **Internal Consultation**

To ensure success of the Race Equality Scheme it needs to be delivered both corporately and operationally. This means a clear understanding of its implications of relevant professionals within the Authority and widespread knowledge of its implications by all staff.

Internal consultees include the Fire Brigades' Union, the Fire Officers' Association, the Association of Principal Fire Officers, UNISON, the Black and Ethnic Minority Members sub group of the FBU and ultimately all personnel.

Clearly, there may be links between internal and external groups, which may also help the process.

There will be a wide distribution of the document and it will also be available on the Intranet. All staff will be able to send any comments to be included into the consultation process via:

- email – [race\\_equality@wmfs.net](mailto:race_equality@wmfs.net)
- telephone - 0121 380 6116
- letter – West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, Lancaster Circus, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DE

### **Internally -**

- The document will be available on the Intranet and available in hard copy and PDF formats for circulation
- Copies of all documentation will be sent to all representative bodies
- Promoting the RES in the Brigade's internal news magazine – Firepower