

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

24 SEPTEMBER 2012

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

Report from the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT following consideration by the Scrutiny Committee, the Authority now approves the report attached as appendix A.
- 1.2 THAT the Authority notes that the Scrutiny Committee will monitor and review progress relating to the implementation of the Equality Objectives and provide regular reports to the Authority.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 At the June 2012 Executive Committee meeting, a draft of the attached report which outlines the Service's achievements as well its objectives for the 2012-2015 was referred to the Authority's Scrutiny Committee for further detailed consideration.
- 2.2 The Authority's Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 July 2012 considered the details of the report making some amendments which have been included in the attached report. Scrutiny Committee now recommends that the Authority approves the report for publication.

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 different people's needs¹.

• 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

- *eliminate unlawful discrimination*, harassment and victimisation and other Conduct prohibited by the Act.
- *advance equality of opportunity* between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- *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 website, hard copies, different formats.

3.6 Also and in particular the information published must include:

- information relating to employees who share protected
- characteristics (for public bodies with 150 or more employees); and
- 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 The attached report demonstrates the Authority's compliance with the Specific Duties.

3.8 In responding to the requirements consideration has also been given to the guidance provided by the Government Equalities Office as well as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, non statutory guidance.

3.9 The report details some of the excellent examples of 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.

3.10 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 of:

- **age** (except for the current contractual retirement age for employees, and restrictions on services set by funding bodies);
- **disability** (or because of something connected with their disability);
- **gender reassignment** (or being transsexual);
- **marriage and civil partnership;**
- **pregnancy and maternity;**
- **race** (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins);
- **religion or belief;**
- **sex; and**
- **sexual orientation.**

3.11 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 being predominantly white male.

3.12 The Service is making efficiency savings and we are not recruiting; therefore the inclusion agenda becomes a vital concept within the heart of our equality and diversity approach.

3.13 The Service has further committed to performing at 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*

3.14 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.

3.15 These objectives also take into consideration the actions we need to take in order to demonstrate '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 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. We therefore do not require a further Equality Impact Assessment.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report responds to our requirements under the Equality Act 2010; Public Sector Equality Duties. 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 report and actions outlined are based on the current level of available resources to the organisation for its Equality and Diversity Section and Community Fire Safety Section.

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 and Rescue Service Annual Equality Report

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER