



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

STRATEGIC EQUALITIES BOARD OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda No:

Date: 17 December 2010

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members the business and actions of the Strategic Equalities Board of Friday 10 September 2010.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Since its introduction, the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has been required to report on its performance against the equalities agenda against the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). Performance indicators were largely devised from the best value framework, along with specific recruitment and retention targets for FRSs.
- 1.2 As the ESLG was devised primarily for local government, the FRS nationally had sought a sector specific framework so that its own performance could be measured accurately. With the ESLG being superseded by the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) have produced the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRS EF). This Framework recognises and addresses the equality and diversity objectives which are a priority for the FRS.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 At its meeting on Friday 19 February 2010 the Fire Authority approved a revised terms of reference for the Strategic Equalities Board to include reference to the new Framework and the Single Equality Scheme, in order to ensure appropriate scrutiny on progress towards the objectives.
- 2.2 The minutes of the Strategic Equalities Board held on Friday 10 September 2010 are attached to this report at Appendix A, to update Members on items currently being discussed by the Board and progress made to date.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The FRS EF is the measure by which the Service can judge its delivery to those under-represented within both the Service and the community. The Framework tests

the commitment and achievement of the Service from Elected Members through to all employee levels. By progressing against this Framework, the Service will be ensuring that it is an employer of choice for all, as well as being able to demonstrate its delivery of service is equal to all.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As a public body Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has both general and specific legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and employees. Failure to comply with such requirements may not only lead to prosecution but could also:

- Reduce the Service's ability to protect and serve the community because of a poor understanding of its needs;
- Cause detriment to employees who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential; and
- Damage the standing and reputation of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

8.2 The Service's performance against the FRS EF will form part of the audit process along with CLG targets within the national strategy for the recruitment and retention of staff. Through the Audit Commission's process of inspection the Service will struggle to achieve better performance results until it achieves the 'achieving' category.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS


That Members note the contents of this report and the business undertaken by the Strategic Equalities Board.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

FOR NOTE

 <p>NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Fire & Rescue Service <i>Creating Safer Communities</i></p>	<p>STRATEGIC EQUALITIES BOARD</p> <p>Friday 10 September 2010 Fire & Rescue Service HQ</p>
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Present:	<p>Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair) Frank Swann Councillor Barrie Cooper John Buckley Matt Sismey Lea-Anne Abbiss</p>	<p>Fire & Rescue Authority Chief Fire Officer Fire & Rescue Authority Assistant Chief Fire Officer Equality & Diversity Officer Notes</p>
Apologies:	<p>Andrew Beale Councillor Penny Griggs Councillor Alex Foster Councillor John Hemsall</p>	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer Fire & Rescue Authority Fire & Rescue Authority Fire & Rescue Authority</p>

		Action
1	<p>APOLOGIES</p> <p>Apologies were received from Andy Beale and Councillors Griggs, Foster and Hemsall.</p>	
2	<p>PREVIOUS MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 May 2010 were considered and agreed as an accurate record.</p>	
3	<p>MATTERS ACTIONS/ARISING</p> <p>3(3) <u>Terms of Reference</u> – are now appended to all agendas of the Board. These will need to be reviewed again in light of the new Equalities Act in October 2010.</p> <p>4 <u>Recruitment</u> – issue had been around the inflexibility in the point of entry selection tests (POEST). The Minister announced on 28/7/10 that POEST would now be for local determination and would no longer be enforced. Linked in to implications regionally, though there has been no progress to date. Future implications will also lie around the RMB and its own future. NFRS may collaborate with a couple of other authorities.</p>	

		Action
4	<p>FUTURE APPROACH TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</p> <p>An equality and diversity discussion paper was circulated to the Board and will be circulated with the minutes for the benefit of those not present today. In addition to outlining how NFRS's equality agenda has been progressed in the last 2½ years, the main points arising were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent announcement by the Minister means that the approach to various elements of the framework will change, including targets which will no longer be enforced, but will be for local determination. NFRS plan to use this as an opportunity to rethink its own approach and address some of the inaccuracies in the targets which were originally given, as well as ensuring obligations are met from within the forthcoming Act coming into force in October. • The second submission to Stonewall has been submitted today. • Peer challenge for the 'achieving' level will take place on 30 November/1 December 2010, with a view to reaching 'excellent' level by 2013. MS will be assessing other Services and so will be able to bring much of this learning back to assist with NFRS's progress. • The recommendation in the report was endorsed and the Service will look for a review of the way in which the equalities agenda is taken forward, which will also incorporate a review of the terms of reference for this Board. Changes to the terms of reference will be circulated and tabled for discussion, before being presented to the full Fire Authority. Future monitoring will also be considered in any subsequent report to the Board. 	<p>LAA</p> <p>FS</p>
5	<p>PROGRESS ON EQUALITIES FRAMEWORK</p> <p>As mentioned earlier in the meeting, there will be a peer assessment later in the year and some Members will be approached to take part in this. Prior to the peer challenge process, a self-assessment will be submitted. An equalities framework evidence progress document was circulated and will be sent out with the minutes. The self-assessment will be completed by mid-October, along with a narrative to sit alongside this. The team will speak to Officers, employees and Elected Members. Initial feedback will be received on 01 December 2010.</p> <p>A process will be put in place so that any Members who are to be interviewed as part of the process, will receive a summary of the information presented in the self-assessment, along with the chance to talk to someone ahead of the interview as preparation. Times/dates to be confirmed with Members as soon as possible.</p>	<p>LAA</p> <p>FS/MS</p> <p>MS</p>

			Action
6		<p>PROGRESS AGAINST EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY TARGETS</p> <p>Linked in to discussions earlier in the meeting and it may be that this item can be removed as a standing item from this agenda. Some recruits have been taken on which will affect the female target figures. Though these are targets which were set under the 'old regime'. NFRS will be looking at these targets as part of the review process, and if this item no longer becomes relevant as a standing item, it will be removed.</p>	FS/MS
7		<p>PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN</p> <p>The action plan had been put in place through the Single Equality Scheme and is broken down in to departmental activities. Through the Equalities Steering Group, all directorates report in on progress and the actions completed. This has been as part of a task and finish process, but with resultant integration into policy and process. A view will need to be taken on what the organisation wants to strive for in the future, in terms of departmental activity, and hence this will form another conclusion of the review which is to take place.</p>	
8	8.1	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p><u>Member Training</u> – a starting point for this would be assessment through a questionnaire process. FS to approach Cllr Griggs with a view to her providing a lead and input to a future Members' seminar, in her capacity as Member E&D Champion.</p>	FS
9		<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Meeting to be convened in December 2010.</p>	LAA