



**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:** 27 May 2011

**Purpose of Report:**

To report to Members the business and actions of the Strategic Equalities Board of Friday 01 April 2011.

## CONTACT OFFICER

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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 With the ESLG being superseded by the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association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 01 April 2011 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**

 <p><b>NOTTINGHAMSHIRE</b> Fire &amp; Rescue Service <i>Creating Safer Communities</i></p>	<p><b>STRATEGIC EQUALITIES BOARD</b></p> <p><b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011</b> <b>Fire &amp; Rescue Service HQ</b></p>
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<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair) John Buckley Councillor Barrie Cooper Councillor Penny Griggs Councillor Alex Foster Andrew Beale Matt Sismey Lara Beardsley	Fire & Rescue Authority Assistant Chief Fire Officer Fire & Rescue Authority Fire & Rescue Authority Fire & Rescue Authority Deputy Chief Fire Officer Equality & Diversity Officer Notes
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillor John Hemsall Frank Swann	Fire & Rescue Authority Chief Fire Officer

			<b>Action</b>
		Councillor Pulk expressed his thanks to attendees for the early convening of this meeting.	
<b>1.</b>		<b>APOLOGIES</b>  Apologies were received from Councillor John Hemsall and CFO Frank Swann.	
<b>2.</b>		<b>PREVIOUS MINUTES</b>  The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2010 were considered and agreed as an accurate record.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>MATTERS/ACTIONS ARISING</b>  <u>Progress on Equalities Framework</u> – Matt Sismey has discussed the potential for corporate use of the “Achieving” logo with Liz Reeson and information is available on both the Intranet and Internet.	
<b>4.</b>		<b>PROGRESS ON EQUALITIES FRAMEWORK</b>  NFRS attained the ‘Achieving’ level of the Framework in December 2010. The FA has agreed at its meeting on the 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2010 that NFRS will aim to achieve the ‘Excellent’ level in 2013 and	

		Action
	<p>this will be the main objective in the Equalities Review. Matt has developed an action plan focussing on what NFRS needs to do to achieve the 'Excellent' level over the next two years.</p>	
<p>5. 6. 7.</p>	<p><b>PROGRESS AGAINST EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY TARGETS PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN EQUALITIES REVIEW</b></p> <p>An update of the E&amp;D targets was taken to the Equalities Steering Group and Matt is stated that these targets were stretching but not unachievable.</p> <p>The Staff Survey 2010 and the recent Employee Data Validation exercise conducted recently proved positive in both the declarations of disability and sexual orientation. MS stated that although the Service still has a way to go it is starting to move forward in these particular areas. The Service's disability declaration rate has gone from 1% to 4% (at time of writing) of employees and the Service's future target will range from 6-8%. The Service's current declaration rate for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff is 1.9%.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>COMMITTEE PAPERS TEMPLATE</b></p> <p>NFRS's EIA template currently appears on <u>all</u> report templates and is there to ensure we do the right thing in terms of thinking about equality and diversity issues. However it was discussed and agreed that the language used in the Equalities Considerations section needs to be more precise e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instead of "please explain your answer:" use the word "<i>Reasons</i>"</li> <li>• instead of "please outline Equalities Considerations:" put "<i>Considerations of Assessments</i>".</li> </ul> <p>And instead of simply putting the word "None" use "<i>We have considered this and there are no E&amp;D implications arising from this report</i>".</p> <p>Matt will discuss the above comments on the EIA template with the CFO.</p> <p>Councillor Griggs raised concern about meeting notes being used as evidence in the High Court and do we need to be very careful in the future? Although Members do not write anything down. DCFO Beale said that Black &amp; Red notebooks will be assigned to all managers and each book will be numbered and retained for future reference. (This was one of the outcomes from the Warwickshire incident). It was agreed that this is an issue for the future.</p>	<p><b>MS</b></p>

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9.	<p><b>NATIONAL CFOA UPDATE</b></p> <p>DCFO Beale is one of three national Principal Officer's working on one of the many CFOA E&amp;D Workstreams: Equalities Data Collection and Business Intelligence (Incident Recording System). Two meetings have occurred involving E&amp;D Champions from Cleveland, Strathclyde and Cheshire F&amp;RS and Matt Sismey. The work objectives of this team are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to review, analyse and evaluate the equalities data collected by F&amp;RS's and the way in which it is currently used in order to inform service delivery;</li> <li>• to evaluate the impact on the Fire Service nationally, in terms of the central collection of data of the Public Sector Equality Duty "Promoting Equality through Transparency" and associated public sector transparency framework, particularly in relation how it relates to the IRS;</li> <li>• to make recommendations which establish national best practice in the collection of equalities data to inform service delivery.</li> </ul> <p>When the work of this group is finalised DCFO Beale will be producing a report on its recommendations to CFOA.</p> <p>Councillor Pulk expressed his thanks to both DCFO Beale and Matt for their input to E&amp;D work nationally and added the importance of recognising how far NFRS has developed in E&amp;D within the last two years. DCFO Beale added that CFO Swann is also involved in E&amp;D for the European sector.</p>	
10.	<p><b>STONEWALL WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX</b></p> <p>Matt gave a presentation on the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.</p> <p>Stonewall is a benchmarking tool for organisations such as government departments, law firms, emergency services, city and county councils.</p> <p>NFRS's score was, as expected, relatively low in year one of the index scoring 61/200 points although in year two the Service improved a great deal by achieving 93/200 points. The average score of a F&amp;RS this year is 112. NFRS is aiming to beat this in 2012.</p> <p>The cost of membership to Stonewall is £2,000 per annum</p> <p>Councillor Pulk thanked Matt for the presentation and said he would be interested to see where we are at in a year's time. Lara will</p>	LB

			Action
		<p>forward a copy of this to all present.</p> <p>Questions arose from the presentation:</p> <p>Councillor Pulk queried our Procurement Policy &amp; Procedure and how far does NFRS go to ensure our contractors meet with our E&amp;D requirements. Matt explained that we work with members of the "Considerate Contractors" scheme and look at the qualities of the companies we purchase from. NFRS has just completed a multi-activity contract with Ampron (our electrical contactors) and Matt met with them recently to discuss E&amp;D which not only helped them but meant we can learn from them too.</p> <p>Councillor Pulk asked about the auditing of our policies and procedures. Matt said we need to improve on this and that there is an intention to introduce random auditing of suppliers through the new procurement contract.</p>	MS
11.		<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>Councillor Pulk expressed his sincere thanks to Councillor Griggs as our E&amp;D Champion for all her hard work and time she has committed to E&amp;D over the years.</p> <p>A new champion will need to be considered at the AGM in May 2011.</p> <p>All members of this Committee also expressed their thanks Councillor Griggs for her hard work over the years.</p> <p>Councillor Griggs thanked Matt Sismey for the work he has done so far at NFRS.</p>	
12.		<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>Confirmed for Friday 24 June 2011, at the rising of the Fire Authority, at Fire Service HQ.</p>	