

## report

Meeting	<b>NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY</b>		
Date	<b>3 September 2004</b>	Agenda Item Number	<b>8</b>

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

### RACE EQUALITY SCHEME CONSULTATION EVENT

#### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to Members feedback from the Race Equality Scheme Consultation Event held at the YMCA in Nottingham on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2004 and to identify issues to feed into procedures for recruitment, community safety and community engagement.

#### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham Fire Authority's Race Equality Scheme has been in place since September 2002. As part of the Race Equality Scheme, the Authority committed to facilitating regular consultation forums with BME communities across Nottinghamshire. The Authority had consulted with BME communities before the scheme was first adopted in September 2002 and the event on the 5<sup>th</sup> July formed the next stage of the consultation process.
- 2.2 BME community representatives were invited from a variety of voluntary organisations to give the Authority the opportunity to ensure we were delivering a Fire & Rescue Service which met the needs of BME communities. Unfortunately attendance for the event was poor.
- 2.3 The event itself comprised of presentations from Cllr. Wood, Fire Authority; Paul Woods, Chief Fire Officer; Milton Crosdale, Director of Nottingham & District Race Equality Council; Julie Dennis, Equalities & Fairness Officer and Naseem Begum, BME Development Worker. Attendees were then given a tour of Central Fire Station followed by a community Safety presentation. Attendees were then asked their views on the Authorities Race Equality Scheme specifically issues relating to recruitment, community safety and community engagement.

#### RECRUITMENT

- 2.4 Prior to discussing issues relating to recruitment attendees were shown Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's recruitment video. All attendees felt that the video outlined all the roles undertaken in the Service and stated the video should be made available, especially in local careers centres.
- 2.5 Main issues discussed focused around the myths that are often associated with the Fire Service and some attendees did not realise that the Service was

positive about recruiting staff from BME groups and that in fact the Service did have a number of BME firefighters already.

- 2.6 Positive feedback was received regarding the recruitment process for Wholetime Firefighters and a number of attendees were willing to assist in future positive action initiatives. However it was felt that the Service needed to create more links with local job and careers centres along with community youth groups etc to work with potential applicants. This could include running workshops which focused specifically on the application process itself as this was still an area where the Service felt it was losing BME applicants. Community leaders were also happy to assist with encouraging their local community to apply for posts within the Service.
- 2.7 Attendees also discussed other career opportunities in the Service and again offered to assist in encouraging local people to apply for vacancies. Attendees thought that the Service just employed firefighters and did not realise the various careers with the Service. Issues highlighted regarding advertising posts within local job centres as well as local media publications such as newsletters.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2.8 The recruitment of the BME Development Worker was a positive sign of the Authority's commitment to Race Equality. However attendees did comment that many people in the community do not see the importance of fire safety and that may be a reason for the poor attendance. One attendee commented on the fact that 'she always knows that we will be there if she had to call 999 in an emergency.'
- 2.9 All agreed that the Service needed to have more emphasis on the importance of fire safety and also how that relates to BME communities. Community Safety campaigns and posters need to relate to BME communities, for example instead of posters depicting chip pans, there should be posters with a Karia.
- 2.10 Attendees also suggested establishing a Fire Safety Forum which could meet on a three monthly basis. Alternately the Service could link into community forums already established by both the City and County Councils.
- 2.11 Community Safety Open Days were also suggested. Attendees recommended the Service run events at local community venues such as community centres and also religious organisations. Local markets, shopping centres etc were also suggested.
- 2.12 Accessing local media such as community newsletters and radio should also be used as a means of communicating Fire Safety messages. These would be particularly useful when focusing on religious festivals such as Diwali and also during Black History Month in October. Most importantly the fire safety message needs to be broken down into a simpler format which is understandable for all sections of the community.

## **3 CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The Race Equality Scheme Consultation Event did confirm some of the action points already highlighted within the Race Equality Scheme Action Plan and the Equalities Action Plan. It also confirmed that the Service is moving in the right direction in relation to community safety and engagement.

- 3.2 The event itself did help the Service deal with some of the myths that surround the Fire Service and communities' perceptions. This will hopefully result in more applicants from BME communities applying for vacancies within the Service.
- 3.3 Closer links with local job and careers centres along with community groups to increase awareness of the Fire Service as a career option need to be established. The Service's recruitment video should also be circulated. Personnel should access local media publications to advertise all vacancies within the Service.
- 3.4 Community Safety Posters should reflect the local community within Nottinghamshire along with cultural needs. This would emphasise the importance of community safety within BME communities.
- 3.5 The Service should access local community forums to raise the fire safety agenda, again emphasising its importance within local communities.
- 3.6 Community Safety Roadshow should be established and held at local community centres and religious organisations to increase Fire Safety awareness specifically in 'hard to reach' communities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
- 3.7 The Service should continue to utilise local publications and radio to communicate their message. This message should be produced in a simple format which is understandable by all sections of the community.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Financial Implications arising from this report.

#### **5 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Personnel Implications arising from this report.

#### **6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The Race Equality Scheme and the consultation event outlines how the Service will deliver its commitment to Race Equality, hence complying with current legislation. Recommendations from this report will be fed into the Race Equality Scheme and the Equalities Strategy.

#### **7 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Potential failure to meet targets for recruitment and PSA (death and injuries) if Service is unable to engage with all communities.

#### **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note this report, the contents of which should be tabled at the Ad-Hoc Equalities Group in order to produce a detailed action plan.

#### **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION**

None.

Paul Woods  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**