

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
date	13 September 2006	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present to Members the Equality & Diversity Plan 2006-2009 for formal adoption.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has set Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for all Fire Authorities to measure individual progress in the areas of equality and diversity, using the Local Government Equality Standard as a framework. The Standard has been developed as a tool for mainstreaming equality for race, gender and disability, but it can also be used for implementing policy around sexuality, religion and age, to meet the requirements of the EU directive and future legislation. In addition, it is designed to help Fire Authorities develop the means to determine the equality outcomes appropriate to their local fire and rescue service and provide evidence based continuous improvement.
- 2.2 Within the Standard, assessment processes provide the basis for collecting and reviewing evidence through which effective equality outcomes can be achieved. To begin with self assessment will be the primarily concerned with putting the Standard in place. As the Authority moves on to Level 3, it will be used to measure progress against the equality objectives set within the Service Plans.
- 2.3 To achieve level two of the Equality Standard, the Authority must produce and publish a corporate equalities plan. The Plan will assist the Authority to progress through the other stages of the Standard.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The Equality and Diversity Plan (Appendix A) sets out how the Authority will ensure equality and diversity issues are incorporated into business planning and delivery activities and so become part of the mainstream activity of the Authority. Departments and individual managers need to build in to their day-to-day activity the commitment to equality for all people, acknowledging that for some the experience of injustice is a reality.
- 3.2 The Equality and Diversity Plan encompasses service delivery and employment issues, and is reviewed annually. The Ad Hoc Group on Equalities will oversee that the Service's commitment to equality and diversity through the action plan is achievable and will outline the resources committed to this work.

3.3 The Service currently achieves Level 1 on the Equality Standard and is striving to reach Level 2 and subsequently Level 3. The Performance Monitoring Committee, along with the Ad-Hoc Equalities Group will be monitoring progress to ensure the Service meets the objectives. This plan is part of this process and outstanding issues will be discussed by Performance Monitoring Committee at its meeting 27 October 2006.

3.4 The Equality and Diversity Plan covers three key areas :

- Ensure all members of the community are treated with equal fairness and respect. Priority is placed on productive interaction with all communities to ensure the achievement of the Community Safety Strategy ;
- Increase the number of women, ethnic minority and disabled staff across the Service thus creating a more diverse workforce ;
- Remove all forms of discrimination or unfair treatment across the Service.

3.4 The Equality and Diversity Action Plan is divided into five primary aims which will link into current Departmental business plans. Targets will be set and monitored by the Ad Hoc Group on Equalities each year and reviewed regularly. The targets and the results of monitoring, and any subsequent actions, will also be made available to the public. In addition to monitoring, all Departments will be required to submit quarterly reports on progress made under the Equality & Diversity Plan to the Strategic Management Team.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Authority can only progress through the Equality Standard for Local Government if it produces its Equality and Diversity Plan. Failure to do so will result in the Authority being unable to meet BVPI 2a Equality Standards for Local Government.

4.2 The House of Commons Select Committee Report into the Fire & Rescue Service, published in June 2006, has clearly linked Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) ratings to equalities targets by recommending Authorities should not receive a CPA rating higher than good, unless it can demonstrate that significant progress has been made on diversity issues generally and within the workforce in particular.

4.3 Issues around non-compliance are, however, more far reaching even than litigation. The damage to organisational reputation may have an adverse effect on ability to deliver the service to diverse communities across Nottinghamshire and also limit choice for recruitment within the working population.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

By committing to a three year Equality & Diversity Plan, the Authority is able to take a long-term look at the financial implications affecting the Service. Departments will need to ensure equalities implications are included when presenting their budgets.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The delivery of the Plan will involve a number of implications relating to the employees of the Service. These will be addressed through the actions of those tasked with delivering the service.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Equality and Diversity Plan sets out the process for Equality Impact Assessment and will assist the Authority in achieving its aims. Hence, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Members approve the 2006-2009 Equality and Diversity Plan as its vision for equalities for the next three years, thus meeting its obligations under the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- 8.2 That Members approve an annual update to ensure the Equality and Diversity Plan remains current, with an annual report on progress each year by the Ad-Hoc Equalities to Policy & Strategy Committee.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

None.

Paul Woods
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER