



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda No:

Date: 1 August 2008

Purpose of Report:

To present to Members a revised structure for equality and diversity management within the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : (0115) 967 5896

Email : frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Elisabeth Reeson
(0115) 967 5889 elisabeth.reeson@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On Wednesday 28 May 2008 Communities and Local Government (CLG) launched the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 for the Fire and Rescue Service nationally. The Strategy had been subject to extensive consultation to which Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service submitted a detailed response, ratified by the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting of 1 February 2008.
- 1.2 Additionally, at the launch of the Equality and Diversity Strategy CLG also released the findings of a survey of current and ex-firefighters in England. In November 2006 the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned an external research company to undertake this survey. The report identifies significant issues for the Service with regard to gender facilities, the role of firefighters and other behaviour.
- 1.3 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has for a long time had a well established Ad-Hoc Equalities Group, however in response to the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the firefighter survey, it is appropriate to review its structure and terms of reference.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have a long established forum for the issue of Equality and Diversity within the Service. This Ad-Hoc Equalities Group has its own terms of reference (attached at Appendix A) and meets on a quarterly basis. In light of the launch of the new Equality and Diversity Strategy and in response to the employee survey, the Service has taken the opportunity to review its current position.
- 2.2 As part of the response, the new Equality and Diversity Officer has taken the opportunity to review the way in which decisions are made, performance is managed and activities are scrutinised.
- 2.3 The current Ad-Hoc Equalities Group has 17 members and it is rare for the meetings to be fully attended. Membership currently includes:
 - Elected Members;
 - Trade Union representatives;
 - Minority group representatives;
 - Senior Managers;
 - Human Resources representatives;
 - Equality & Diversity Officer.

Compared with other organisations within the Fire and Rescue Services and the public sector this is unwieldy and does not encourage departments and managers to own the equalities agenda. It is primarily seen as a forum and lacks a “steering group” approach to tackling inequality within the Service.

- 2.4 Following a review of this structure and in response to the recent publications by CLG, the Equality and Diversity Officer has recommended that the current governance structure is reviewed and refreshed. Key to this would be:
- Changing the terms of reference, name and make up of the current Ad-Hoc Equalities Group.
 - The establishment of a new Equalities Action Group led and attended by managers.
 - The establishment of minority group forum where issues relating to them can be discussed in a safe, confidential environment. Such groups could also act as key consultees in any Service proposals.
 - A Trade Union consultation group established that would ensure productive engagement and response.
 - A clear reporting mechanism on equalities performance.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the Ad-Hoc Equalities Group is replaced by a Strategic Equalities Board. Membership of this group would be much smaller and its remit much tighter. Draft terms of reference are attached at Appendix B for information, although any confirmation would be subject to consultation. An open invitation would be extended to interested parties to attend as observers to ensure openness.
- 2.6 In support of this revised board and to ensure that equalities becomes further embedded and mainstreamed across the Service, all departments need to be involved or associated with the issues. In order to do this it is further proposed that an Equalities Action Group is chaired by a member of the Strategic Management Team and supported by managers based in departments. This would ensure that the strategic approach of the Member/Officer Board is cascaded throughout the organisation. Specific membership and terms of reference have been developed to support this process and are attached at Appendix C.
- 2.7 The formation of specific employee engagement and consultation groups covering areas such as disability, minority ethnic and women, for example, would ensure that all employees, trade unions and staff are engaged in any equalities actions. An outline of how the structure is proposed to look is attached at Appendix D.
- 2.8 Initial soundings have already been taken with the present Ad-Hoc Members Group on Equalities and these have received a positive response. Likewise the Assistant Chief Fire Officer Risk Response has already chaired a meeting of the proposed Equalities Action Group to determine its direction and impact on the wider organisation.

- 2.9 It is essential that the Service maintains open dialogue with the representative bodies and continues its engagement on key issues such as recruitment and retention, staff development, and internal procedures and policies such as harassment and bullying. Therefore the employee engagement groups will be essential in the long-term goals of the Service.
- 2.10 It is anticipated that formal adoption of this approach and structure would commence with Policy and Strategy Committee approval at the earliest opportunity.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Service currently allocates a specific budget to the equalities agenda which covers some actions to improve the service performance such as seminars, community events and literature. Additionally, funds from the training budget are used to support recruitment of underrepresented groups within the Service. There will be a need to review these amounts in response to the national strategy to ensure the Service meets its legal and moral obligations with regard to equalities.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The recruitment, development and retention of a diverse workforce is essential for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service if it is to continue to deliver a quality of service and create a better understanding of the advice and support the public can receive. Recruitment of staff and their ongoing development will need to form a key part of the Service's approach to its staff in the future.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix E.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The new structure will ensure that the Service meets its legal duty under various equalities legislation.

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 Performance against CLG's targets within the Equality and Diversity Strategy will be measured through annual returns and the Audit Commission inspection process. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service may not be able to achieve a "performing well" assessment until it achieves Level 3 on the Equality Standard for Local Government scale. This could lead to the potential of intervention by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1 Agree the revised governance arrangements as proposed;
- 9.2 Recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority that the existing governance arrangements for equality and diversity are amended to reflect the new arrangements;
- 9.3 Recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority that the proposed new Equality Board be tasked with devising a revised set of performance indicators on which the Performance Monitoring Committee will receive its quarterly report on equalities issues.

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

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
AD HOC EQUALITIES GROUP**

To consider, monitor and make recommendations in relation to the following areas:

1. Issues relating to equal opportunities and diversity within the Fire & Rescue Authority and the Service.
2. The Authority's Action Plan attached to its Race Equality Scheme and to ensure that these are implemented in a timely manner.
3. To ensure that any and all consultations and communications carried out by the Fire & Rescue Authority engage with, and reflects the views of, Nottinghamshire's diverse communities.
4. To ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are carried out by the Fire & Rescue Authority and any outcomes are actioned.
5. The development of performance indicators and target setting for the Service in relation to diversity issues.
6. To have due regard to Equal Opportunities and, in particular, the Authority's responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
7. To ensure that the Fire & Rescue Authority meet its requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
8. To report, as required, to the Policy & Strategy Committee on the Services' progress with regard to Equalities issues (added by Fire & Rescue Authority at its meeting on 9 June 2006).

STRATEGIC EQUALITIES BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE**Frequency of meetings : Quarterly****Overall Objective**

To ensure that Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Fire and Rescue Authority sets and maintains its strategic direction in relation to equality and diversity in order to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of opportunity, and to promote equality in terms of the people it serves, its workforce, the partners it works with and the services it delivers.

Proposed Role and Function

- To oversee NFRS's discharge of its statutory responsibilities in relation to race, disability and gender and other relevant areas of equalities legislation and/or guidance that may arise in future.
- To set the strategic direction of the equalities agenda at NFRS through assessment of national strategy and local need
- To act as a group for consultation at member level.
- To forge effective relationships with ONE Nottingham (LSP) and community group leaders in order to support achievement of corporate NFRS objectives and those of our partners
- To inform and support the work of the Equalities Action Group
- To report progress back to the Policy and Strategy and Performance Committees.

Proposed Membership

Councillor (Chair of Group)
Councillor (Vice Chair of Group)
Councillor
Councillor
Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Equality and Diversity Officer

EQUALITIES ACTION GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Frequency of meetings : every 2 months

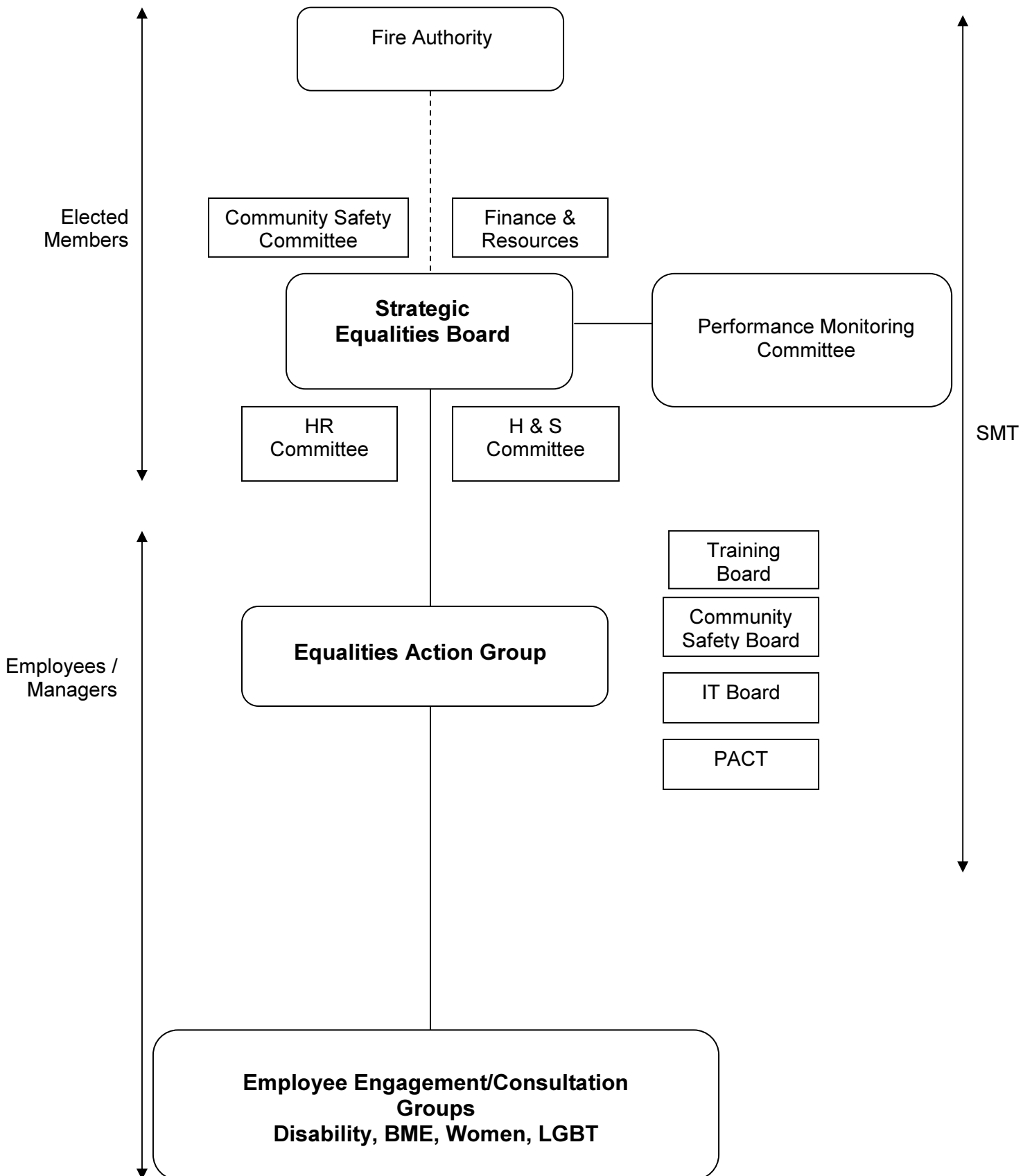
Overall Objective

To ensure effective and co-ordinated action across Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service, to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity, and to promote equality in terms of the people it serves, its workforce, the partners it works with and the services it delivers.

Proposed Role and Function;

- To ensure NFRS's discharge of its statutory responsibilities in relation to race, disability and gender and other relevant areas of equalities legislation and/or guidance that may arise in future.
- To co-ordinate action and strategy on the equality agenda across the Service by ensuring that work within and between departments is effectively co-ordinated and prioritised so that objectives are met.
- To develop innovative, creative and effective solutions to achieve equalities objectives.
- To monitor and report on the progress made by departments on their equalities objectives.

APPENDIX D



INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<i>Section</i>	<i>Manager</i>	<i>Date of Assessment</i>	<i>New or Existing</i>
SMT	CFO Swann	16 July 2008	N/A
Name of Report to be assessed		EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.		To present to Members a revised structure for equality and diversity management within the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.	
2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes?		Fire & Rescue Authority Members, Employees, Trade Unions, stakeholders. The outcomes would be measured by the Service being of greater diversity than at present.	
3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?		Fire & Rescue Authority Members, Employees, Trade Unions, CLG.	
4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?		Strategic Management and Policy & Strategy Committee will be responsible for ensuring its delivery.	

Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

<i>STRAND</i>	Y	N	<i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>					
Race		X							
Gender		X							
Disability		X							
Religion or Belief		X							
Sexuality		X							
Age		X							
6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group?			Y	N	7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?			Y	N
									X

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing person)

CFO Swann

Date 16 July 2008