



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

EQUALITIES REVIEW

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 29 October 2010

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Policy and Strategy Committee with recommendations made for a review of the equality and diversity function and to seek agreement on the terms of reference for this piece of work.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the change in Government in May of this year and the enactment of the Equality Act 2010 from October 2010, the Strategic Equalities Board (SEB), at its' meeting of 10 September 2010 felt it was necessary to undertake a review of the way in which equalities is governed, managed and delivered at NFRS to ensure that it is fit for purpose moving forwards.

'.....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' (Strategic Equalities Board Minutes 10/09/10)

- 1.2 The Corporate Management Board (CMB) agreed this approach and the proposed terms of reference at their meeting on 18 October 2010. However, as the proposed Equalities Review includes an appraisal of the governance of the equalities agenda, including the Strategic Equalities Board and its own terms of reference, it is appropriate for the Policy and Strategy Committee to agree the proposed terms of reference for the Equalities Review itself.
- 1.3. Below is a short synopsis of the changes which have led to proposals for a review of the equalities function.

National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy

- 1.4 The Fire and Rescue Service has had specific targets for the recruitment of under-represented groups since the inception of best value and performance indicators on recruitment and retention. In 2008, following the demise of the best value framework more formal targets were proposed in The National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- 1.5 As part of the new strategy, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service committed to a 'stretch target' relating to the recruitment of female firefighters and an ambitious target relating to the recruitment of people from BME backgrounds across all roles.
- 1.6 The targets the Service committed itself to were:
- BME; 14.5% of all entrants to the organisation to be from BME backgrounds by 2013
 - Gender; 18% of entrants to operational roles are women by 2013
- 1.7 On 28 July 2010 the Fire Minister Bob Neil made an announcement to Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of Fire Authorities in London that he:
- "will not be enforcing recruitment, retention and progression targets or monitoring compliance with the National Equality and Diversity Strategy. This

is an area where leadership and commitment should come from within the Service.” (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1654085>)

- 1.8 This now gives individual Fire and Rescue Services the responsibility for their own recruitment and retention of staff including decisions on female and BME recruits.

The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework

- 1.9 The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework was launched in December of 2009 and replaced the former Equality Standard for Local Government which had been applied to Fire and Rescue Services' performance in this area and had formed part of both CPA and CAA processes. In the Service's new plan for 2010-13 it states an intention to reach the Achieving level of the Framework by December 2010 and the Excellent level by 2013.
- 1.10 The Service has a planned audit for late November to assess its current performance in its efforts to be classified as 'Achieving'. The assessment process is part of the peer review mechanism through the LGA, the concept of which the Service has already utilised through the Ops Assurance Peer Assessment.

Equality Act 2010

- 1.11 The new Equality Act received royal assent in April 2010 and its main provisions came into force in October 2010. This piece of legislation strengthens and pulls together equalities legislation going back as far as the Equal Pay Act, 1970.
- 1.12 The Equalities Review would seek to consider the impact of this legislation and recommend a way forward.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 In order to provide a mutual understanding of the scope, aims and objectives of the Equalities Review, the Strategic Equalities Board suggested that a set of terms of reference were produced. These can be found below:
- 2.2 To review and make recommendations on the following:
 - 1 All current equalities objectives/targets
 - Strategic drivers for the Service in terms of equality and diversity.
 - Single Equality Scheme: Local performance Indicators and Equalities Action Plan
 - Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework
 - § Achieving level December 2010 – consider outcome of the peer challenge

- § Excellent level by 2013 – maintenance of this aspiration
- Equality Act 2010: what impact will this have on the Service in the future
- Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-18

2 Governance

- Scrutiny and management of performance of the equality and diversity agenda including the reporting process for Combined Fire Authority;

3 External Scrutiny/Best Practice

- Peer Challenge: is this new process proving popular? Is it fit for purpose?
- Experience of other Authorities' Audits
- National Equalities Professionals Group

4 Outcomes of Review

- Revised objectives / targets / aspirations
- Possible revised governance arrangements
- External scrutiny / audit process

2.3 It is recommended that the Policy and Strategy Committee is asked to agree these Terms of Reference for the Equalities Review, so that the Review can be undertaken. The Equality and Diversity Officer will be responsible for undertaking the review and the lead principal officer will be ACFO John Buckley in his role as Chair of the Equalities Steering Group.

2.4 The Review will be completed using existing resources and will include consultation with internal and external stakeholders. The outcomes of the review will be reported to the Fire Authority for final approval prior to implementation in 2011.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper has no direct financial implications. However, the Equalities Review may lead to recommendations that have implications for the Service and these will be fully explored and reported to the Fire Authority.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

This paper does not have any direct human resources or learning and development implications. However, the outcome of the review may impact upon these functions.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Equalities Review will consider any unjustifiable adverse impact on different groups of people. An equality impact assessment for this paper is therefore unnecessary.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Although there are no direct legal implications arising from this paper, the assessment of implications of the Equality Act 2010 is a part of the terms of reference of the Equalities Review.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report. However, it should be noted that one of the roles of the Equalities Review is to mitigate risk to the organisation by ensuring that its current arrangements, in terms of equality, match those of the strategic direction of the Service in a new economic and political environment.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members agree the proposed terms of reference for the Equalities Review.

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

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER