

Equality and Diversity Steering Group Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Jonathan Hyams, Equality and Diversity Officer, on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with a summary report on the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group from May to August 2010

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

3 Background

The remit of The Equality and Diversity Steering Group is:

- To improve the services we provide to the wider Shropshire community.
- To promote community cohesion and anti-discrimination with people living and working in Shropshire, including issues of rural access, social isolation and income inequality.
- To initiate, facilitate and monitor projects to improve the wellbeing of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) employees.
- To promote excellence in equality and diversity practice throughout the organisation.
- To maintain organisational focus and ensure strategic priorities for Equality and Diversity in the organisation and the communities we serve.
- To ensure that SFRS culture encourages employees and service users to be valued and accepted as individuals.
- Provide leadership, strategic direction, development and resources to ensure progression of our Equality Framework and Single Equality Scheme.

The full Terms of Reference of the Group are attached as an appendix to this report.

4 Main Areas of Work

The work of the Steering Group has made good progress since February 2010 on enabling implementation of actions in the new Single Equality Action Plan. The main areas of Steering Group work during this period are summarised below:

- The Single Equality Action Plan has been monitored for progress and its content and priorities have been reviewed in light of its effectiveness in delivering Equality and Diversity outcomes;
- The three year Equality Impact Assessment plan has continued to be monitored. Individual departments have reviewed, edited and prioritised their outstanding assessments. The Steering Group has sanctioned work with Shropshire Council, Shropshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and West Mercia Police Equality and Diversity Officers to share our respective EQIA processes and to explore whether they can be more closely aligned with each other;
- A Service Level Agreement for 2010/11 has been drafted with Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnership,
- Dealing with membership subscriptions and funding requests, including a small contribution to the Rainbow Film Festival
- Finalising the Gap Analysis report against the Fire Service Equality Framework criteria ;
- Continuing to plan, administer and deliver training and information – including Hate Crime briefings, E&D staff catch-up training, cultural awareness induction training, and a briefing on the Equality Act 2010;
- Progressing Brigade Orders on Equality and Diversity Monitoring, Dyslexia, Harassment and Bullying, and Translation;
- Planning for RDS Positive Action and ‘Bring Our Daughters to Work’ days
- Continuing to develop a consultation about levels of LGB satisfaction with public services, in partnership with Shropshire Council, Shropshire PCT, Telford and Wrekin Council, Victim Support, Citizens Advice, Shropshire LGB Network and other agencies;
- Supporting the development of a Shropshire Pride Ball to be held at the Albright Hussey in November 2010 as a stage in developing a full Shropshire Pride event;
- Dyslexia awareness sessions are being set up for staff who have first contact with possibly dyslexic employees, in order to improve the process of identification and support;
- A training session on Gypsies and Travellers is being developed for public-facing employees, with the support and advice of Shropshire Council’s Gypsy Liaison Service.

In addition the Steering Group has received a presentation by White Watch at Wellington Fire Station on five key areas of their work with local communities, including work with the local Women’s Refuge, work with Eastern European employees at Denso Manufacturing (UK) Ltd, talking with children and young people at Ketley Brook Traveller Site and at Hadley Sikh Temple, and work with action groups in the local community.

Future meetings of the Steering Group are to be held in different fire stations, to enable them to hear from Station Managers about their work in their local communities.

5 Government's Local Agenda

At its meeting in August, the Steering Group discussed the speech to the Fire and Rescue Service at Harrogate on 29 June 2010 by the Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP. In it, he questioned national targets for workforce diversity, and the recruitment and selection of staff. The speech included reference to the desirability of local decision-making, local accountability and self-challenge, and the need to reduce central regulation and 'red tape'; and to 'the future role of localism and the opportunity that a Big Society can bring'.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct Financial Implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

The majority of the provisions of The Equality Act 2010 will come into legal force on 1 October 2010. This Act replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act of Parliament and brings in new concepts relating to discrimination as well as expanding on the types of behaviours, which might amount to discrimination. It is recommended that the Fire Authority understands its responsibilities under the Act, and that it continues to give emphasis to equality and diversity work, thereby reducing risks of legal challenge. Legal Services are available to provide technical support regarding the new Act if required.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required, as this report is an update report looking at historical information.

9 Appendix

Terms of Reference for the Equality and Diversity Steering Group

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Member Involvement	
Capacity		National Framework	
Civil Contingencies Act		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Public Value	
Environmental		Retained	
Financial		Risk and Insurance	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Staff	*
Information Communications and Technology		Strategic Planning	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*
Legal	*		

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Terms of Reference for the Equality & Diversity Steering Group

1. Vision

The vision of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group is to ensure that that all employees feel valued and are treated appropriately at work and that our services meet the needs of Shropshire's diverse communities,

2. Aims

The aims of the Steering Group are to provide a forum:

- To improve the services we provide to the wider Shropshire community.
- To promote community cohesion and anti-discrimination with people living and working in Shropshire, including issues of rural access, social isolation and income inequality.
- To initiate, facilitate and monitor projects to improve the wellbeing of SFRS employees.
- To promote excellence in equality and diversity practice throughout the organisation.
- To maintain organisational focus and ensure strategic priorities for Equality and Diversity in the organisation and the communities we serve.
- To ensure that SFRS culture encourages employees and service users to be valued and accepted as individuals.
- Provide leadership, strategic direction, development and resources to ensure progression of our Equality Framework and Single Equality Scheme.

3. Objectives

The group will:

- Agree action plans, monitor and enable SFRS to progress implementation of the Fire Service Equality Framework, National Equality and Diversity Strategy, Single Equality Scheme and the Corporate Equality Action Plan to a standard of excellence.
- Ensure that SFRS values and is approachable by all of the communities we serve.
- Provide a rigorous and structured approach for promoting improvement against the above.
- Ensure that all managers are aware of their equality and diversity priorities and objectives.
- Make equality improvements to the 7 strands of diversity, and other areas as identified by the Steering Group.

- Maintain the positive culture of the organisation.
- Ensure that all areas of the organisation understand and support the implementation of SFRS Equality and Diversity priorities.
- Identify and encourage best practice and positive initiatives.

4. **Membership**

The core membership will be 8 individuals representing the range of services and departments across the Service. The group will be chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

The core membership will be:

- Chief Fire Officer (Chair)
- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Brigade Manager – Human Resources, Training and Development
- Brigade Manager – Service Support
- Brigade Manager – Service Delivery
- Head of Resources
- Equality & Diversity Officer
- Human Resources Manager
- Member Champion for Equality and Diversity

Representative bodies will be invited to attend all appropriate meetings.

5. **Frequency**

The group will meet at least every 6 weeks. The duration of meetings will be between 1½ – 3 hours. Additional meetings will be arranged if required.

6. **Governance**

The group will send update reports to the Human Resources Committee.

An update will be given to the Chair of the Fire Authority during Chair's Briefings.

7. **Role of the membership**

- To attend meetings regularly
- To contribute fully, to enable the group to comply with its terms of reference
- To undertake duties assigned by the group
- To act as advocates of the Equality and Diversity Steering group and the broader equality and diversity agenda within their area.
- To ensure that the work of the group and the broader equality and diversity agenda are communicated widely.

8. **Role of representative bodies**

- To contribute fully to the group enable it to comply with its terms of reference
- To represent the views of their members on equality and diversity issues in SFRS

9. **Scrutiny**

Scrutiny is undertaken by Policy Group who report to the Human Resources Committee. External equality groups are used for peer and/or critical friend challenge and the Audit Commission undertakes statutory scrutiny.

10. **Review**

These terms of reference will be reviewed annually