

## New Single Equality Scheme

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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

#### 1 Purpose of Report

To provide the Human Resources (HR) Committee with information regarding our current equality schemes and the new proposed Single Equality Scheme.

#### 2 Recommendations

The HR Committee is asked to:

- a) Endorse the approach of having a Single Equality Scheme.
- b) Allow the Equality and Diversity Steering Group to oversee the development of the Single Equality Scheme.

#### 3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) currently have 3 separate equality schemes with individual action plans, which are a legislative requirement:

- Disability Equality Scheme
- Gender Equality Scheme
- Race Equality Scheme

The action plans from these schemes are monitored by the HR Committee through the Corporate Equality Action Plan.

With the introduction of The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) this brought an end to the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC). The purpose of this was to mainstream all of these strands and to address all issues of equality and diversity.

The government is reviewing all current equalities legislation and plans to introduce a Single Equality Bill, which will allow all legislation to be mainstreamed.

## **4 Recommendations**

Some of our equality schemes are due or shortly due for renewal and with the imminent introduction of the Single Equality Bill it was seen as sensible for SFRS to replace the 3 current equality schemes with a Single Equality Scheme which would cover the 7 strands as detailed below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Transgender

This proposal has been endorsed by SFRS Equality and Diversity Steering Group, and is a way of mainstreaming activities so that this is viewed as a user friendly scheme. It is recommended that the Equality and Diversity Steering group oversee the development of the new Single Equality Scheme.

This new scheme will go through a process of involvement and consultation with both internal and external parties. When the information from these has been collated and analysed this will then help to inform the 3 year action plan.

## **5 Timeframe**

Please see Appendix A for approximate dates.

These timescales will ensure that appropriate and adequate involvement and consultation has taken place, these will involve workshops/focus groups across the County.

SFRS are also working in partnership with Shropshire Council and Shropshire and Telford PCT to undertake some of the involvement sessions with the public to take into consideration their views and requirements.

## **6 Financial Implications**

The financial implications can be met out of the current Equality and Diversity budget.

## **7 Legal Comment**

The responsibilities of a public body regarding equality are set out in legislation and statutory codes of practice relating to the:

Equal Pay Act 1970

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Human Rights Act 1998

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA 2000)

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005), and

Equality Act 2006 (EA 2006)

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

The core general duties are similar for disability, gender and race, to give due regard to the need to:

promote equality of opportunity between equality groups, and

eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment (as defined in the legislation

and including for example discrimination on the grounds of gender

reassignment)

## **8 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

## **9 Appendix**

Timescales for the creation and implementation of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Single Equality Scheme

## **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.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

## Timescales for the creation and implementation of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services Single Equality Scheme

