

## Introduction of Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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### 1 Purpose of Report

To inform the Human Resources Committee about the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework

### 2 Recommendations

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

### 3 Background

The new national Fire and Rescue Services Equality Framework (the Framework) was launched at the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) Innovations Conference on 7 and 8 December 2009.

The Fire and Rescue Service has been developing its own equality framework for a number of years. The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework for Local Government has now superseded the Equality Standard for Local Government, and the Improvement and Development Agency has been working with CFOA to develop this new Framework. The Framework addresses equality and diversity objectives that are specific to the Fire and Rescue Service but it is based upon the same principles as the Equality Framework for Local Government, focusing on outcomes and continuous improvement. It replaces the previous four achievement levels with three new ones:

- 'Developing'
- 'Achieving'
- 'Excellent'

The Framework has been cross-mapped with the national Fire and Rescue Service: Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 to 2018, and incorporates the same five priority areas:

- Leadership and promoting inclusion
- Accountability
- Effective service delivery and community engagement
- Employment and training
- Evaluation and sharing good practice

The Framework has a strong correlation with relevant statutory duties and external assessment methodologies. It should enable evidence to be provided that will be relevant to:

- Statutory duties
- The Fire And Rescue Service: Equality And Diversity Strategy 2008 to 2018
- Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs)
- Operational assurance
- The 'managing performance' element of organisational assessments

Communities and Local Government and the Audit Commission recognise the Framework as an appropriate means to measure and accredit the equality and diversity performance of individual Fire and Rescue Services.

## **4 Current Situation**

In March 2009 Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service became one of a very few Fire Services to achieve Level 4 under the Equality Standard for Local Government, the predecessor for the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

Under the new arrangements, this Service is graded as 'Moving towards excellent', which falls between 'Achieving' and 'Excellent', and our performance will be audited in three years' time. The Service's new Single Equality Scheme Action Plan contains a number of actions, which will take the Service towards the 'Excellent' classification, and progress on this will be monitored and reported regularly to this Committee.

Our first activity will be to do a gap analysis between the Equality Standard and the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework to ensure all areas are covered.

## **5 Financial Implications**

We have consulted with the Principal Accountant and are confident that any associated costs can be met from within existing budgets.

## 6 Legal Comment

There are no further legal comments to make on the contents of this report.

## 7 Equality Impact Assessment

This Framework contains criteria against which Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's progress on equality and diversity will be measured by external assessment and audit. It will, therefore, result in equality improvements for staff and service users, and for the wider Shropshire community.

An Equality Impact Assessment for this report has been completed.

## 8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report

## 9 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	*