

14. Equality and Diversity Advisory Group Update

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Policy and Resources Committee of the key areas of discussion at the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group meeting in July 2012.
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Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the Policy and Resources Committee note the content of this report.

Update

2. The first meeting of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group was held on 31 July 2012. The proposed Terms of Reference detailed in Appendix 1 were approved at the meeting.
3. The Group is now chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and represented by all departments across the Service at Group Commander level. Membership also includes the Representative Bodies, the Chaplain and two Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority (including the FRA Equality Champion). A representative from staff groups, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics will remain independent to the group but will be encouraged to attend the meetings when they feel it is appropriate.
4. The Group were informed that:
 - The Service no longer needed a dedicated Equality and Diversity Officer as Equality and Diversity will be mainstreamed across the Service with the Human Resources department providing the specialist support.
 - The Equality Scheme expires in March 2013, and a position statement on the achievement of the associated action plan is currently being developed.
 - In accordance with the Equality Act the Authority will be required to publish at least one objective from April 2013 and every four years thereafter to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Act. A sub group of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group is considering suitable objective/s which will be presented at a future Policy and Resources Committee.
 - The Service's Ethical Framework has been updated and will be published as an A5 booklet. It was considered that FRA Members should sign up to the Framework and that this should take place after the May 2013 elections. Training will be rolled out across the Service and will be delivered to Members of the FRA.
 - The Group considered the Employment Monitoring data for 2011-12.

- The Group were informed that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) had commenced consultation on the repeal of third party harassment provisions and the statutory discrimination questionnaire.
5. The Group were informed that the Government Equalities Office had announced that it intends to review the Public Sector Equality Duty to establish if it is working as intended.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	No	

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	Yes	Paras 4 and 5

Additional Considerations

6. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	No	
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	No	
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	No	
Consultation with Representative Bodies	No	

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Background papers

None

Contact Officer

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Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Equality and Diversity Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

1. Core Function

The core function of the **Equality and Diversity Advisory Group** will be to promote equality of opportunity and thereby help to eliminate unlawful discrimination within Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and to develop a working environment where individual diversity is valued.

2. Main Activities

The Group's main activities will be to:

- a. Act in an advisory capacity to the Fire and Rescue Authority, Senior Management Board and other interested parties and drive the mainstreaming of Equality and Diversity as much as possible, with Human Resources retaining a specialist role.
- b. Support the need for Equality and Diversity to be viewed as a cross-organisational priority to be incorporated into day to day activity as far as possible.
- c. Provide feedback to both the Senior Management Board (SMB) and the Fire and Rescue Authority's (FRA's) Policy and Resources Committee.
- d. Advise SMB and the FRA to ensure that the Authority meets the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- e. Review the Service's Equality Objectives and Action Plan to ensure they meet organisational needs.
- f. Examine opportunities for development of activity to meet local, regional and national needs.
- g. Respond to local concerns, and ensure systems are in place to allow concerns to be raised by stakeholders. The group will develop and co-ordinate effective and appropriate responses.
- h. Establish sub-groups/working groups on an issue-basis, with a view that they will exist for a finite period, with clear objectives for completion.
- i. Identify and disseminate good practice and organisational learning.

3. Membership

Membership of the Group will ensure that each department of the Service is represented in order to mainstream Equality and Diversity across the whole Service. Attendance will normally be at Group Commander and Area Commander, or equivalent, level. One member will attend the meeting from the following departments:

- Asset Management
- Community Risk
- Corporate Services
- Human Resources
- Operations (Service Delivery)
- Operations Support (Service Support)
- Finance
- Legal
- Representative Bodies (FBU, RFU, GMB, Unison)

One representative from each of the Representative Bodies is invited to attend the meetings although they may elect to nominate one representative to attend on behalf of all the Representative Bodies

Membership will also include the Service Chaplain and two FRA Members, one of whom shall be the FRA Equality Champion.

If a nominated Officer is unable to attend a meeting, they will identify someone else from their area to attend on their behalf.

A representative from staff groups, particularly in relation to any of the protected characteristics (i.e. gender, age, race, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity), will remain independent from the Group but will be encouraged to attend the meetings when they feel it is appropriate.

4. Format of Meetings

Meetings will normally be chaired by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO).

In the absence of the CFO, meetings will be chaired by an individual nominated by the Chair.

The Group shall meet on a quarterly basis.

The agenda will consist of key subjects for discussion and information.

Agenda items may be added by notifying the Personal Assistant to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Reviewed July 2012