

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/08/25
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	14 October 2008
SUBJECT OF REPORT	AUTHORITY CORPORATE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME - "MAKING THE CONNECTIONS"
LEAD OFFICER	Head of Human Resources Management and Development
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a) that the first draft Authority Corporate Equality Scheme - "Making The Connections" – as appended to this report be</i></p> <p><i>(b) that Members be invited to contribute to the development of the "Making The Connections" Corporate Single Equality ;</i></p> <p><i>(c) that further reports on progressing development of the Scheme be submitted to future meetings;</i></p> <p><i>(d) that, subject to (a) to (c) above, the report be noted.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report follows on from consideration by the Authority, at its last meeting, of the implications of the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy and focuses on production of a first Draft Authority Corporate Single Equality Strategy that will be key to ensuring that both the Authority and Service meet the requirements of the National Strategy.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	
APPENDICES	A. Draft copy of "Making the Connections" – the DSFRS Corporate Single Equality Scheme. (Page numbered separately and enclosed with this agenda.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its last meeting the Authority received a report on the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality & Diversity Strategy and action proposed both for the Authority and Service to ensure that the requirements of the Strategy are met. Legislation requires that the promotion of equality and diversity is at the heart of everything undertaken by both the Authority and the Service.
- 1.2 The Fire & Rescue National Framework Document 2008-11 and the Equality & Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 contain a number of requirements for both the Authority and the Service in relation to the development and implementation of policies which support and promote equality and diversity. The Strategy stipulates, amongst other things, that:-
- “We... [the Department of Communities and Local Government]... will ensure that all Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and all employees are held accountable for delivering this Strategy.*
- Additionally, the most recent iteration of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11 (which is statutorily enforced by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) provides that **“Fire and Rescue Authorities must...implement the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy”**
- 1.3 Key to this for both the Authority and the Service is the development of a Corporate Equality Scheme. Guidelines produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission recommend the production of a single Equality Scheme encompassing all 6 strands (gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief).
- 1.4 These guidelines have been followed in developing a Scheme for both the Authority and the Service which will also be linked to:
- the Authority’s Corporate Plan
 - the Departmental and Area business plans for the Service (which in turn emanate from the Corporate Plan); and
 - The corporate response and improvement plan resulting from the recent staff survey
- 1.5 Equality and Diversity is still not seen as fully embedded within the Service hence, following discussion it was felt that the title “Making The Connections” for the Corporate Equality Scheme was both memorable and appropriate in reinforcing that the equality and diversity agenda was at the heart of all Service and Authority activities.
- 1.6 The Human Resources Management and Development Committee at its last meeting considered a report on development of the Scheme and, amongst other things, appointed Cllr. Pat Parker as Equality and Diversity Member Champion to assist in the Scheme’s development.
- 1.7 The National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy makes it clear that the responsibility for the promotion of equality and diversity rests jointly with Members at full Authority level together with all Service employees. In recognition of this, Priority 2a of the Authority’s Corporate Plan is “To improve the Service’s approach to equality and diversity”. One of the targets’s under that priority is that DSFRS will achieve Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard by 2010. The Authority’s Corporate Single Equality Scheme – the first draft of which is appended to this report - will be a significant driver to achieving that target.

2. HOW WILL THE CORPORATE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME HELP TO ACHIEVE PRIORITY 2A?

2.1 The Scheme will:

- be built on evidence provided by community/staff consultation;
- bring together and highlight in one document all the current and future activities in DSFRS that are relevant to the Local Government Equality Standard;
- have the 6 equality strands clearly identified within it;
- have DSFRS functions relating to each strand clearly identified;
- detail our priorities for Equality Impact Assessing policies;
- have a 3 year action plan setting out our direction of travel;
- have a person identified as being responsible for each action;
- contribute towards changing organisational culture (National framework document 2008 – 2011).

3. WHAT PLANS AND PROJECTS ARE ALREADY RUNNING THAT WILL LINK WITH THE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME?

3.1 The Equality & Diversity Unit is currently managing 8 projects (at various stages of development) that will provide the foundations and on-going progress of the Corporate Single Equality Scheme:

- On-line E-learning Equality & Diversity Training programme
- Engaging with Hard to Reach Groups
- Improve monitoring of Equality & Diversity performance data
- Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments of all training courses
- Positive Action Working Group to develop and implement a Positive Action Strategy
- Harmonisation of all Equality & Diversity Policies
- Reviewing the Equality Impact Assessment Procedures
- Promote Core Values

4. AT WHAT STAGE IS THE CORPORATE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME DOCUMENT?

4.1 Following some preliminary consultation a first draft has been produced a copy of which is attached to this report for consideration by the Authority with a view to endorsement.

5. WHAT WILL BE THE NEXT STEPS?

5.1 As already indicated, Councillor Pat Parker has been identified as being the Authority's Equality and Diversity Member Champion to assist with, amongst other things, development of the Authority's Scheme. Although the first instance of such direct Member involvement in policy development work, it may nonetheless be the case that this might prove a model for further direct engagement opportunities with Members.

- 5.2 In terms of progressing the Corporate Single Equality Scheme, a series of meetings with middle and senior managers is planned to gain input to fully develop the action plan for the next 3 years.
- 5.3 To ensure effective and appropriate linkage between the Corporate Single Equality Scheme, the Corporate Plan and the Departmental plans, the Equality & Diversity Unit will work in conjunction with Service Planning and the Project and Planning team as and when they meet with all departments during the planning cycle.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy makes explicit the legislative responsibilities for equality and diversity to be fully embedded in all Authority and Service activities. The Corporate Single Equality Scheme will be key to ensuring that the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority and Service have appropriate strategies and processes in place to secure this. The first draft of the Scheme is, therefore, commended for approval.

JANE SHERLOCK

Head of Human Resources Management and Development