

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



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| REPORT REFERENCE NO. | DSFRA/08/26 |
| MEETING | DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 23 October 2008 |
| SUBJECT OF REPORT | NATIONAL EQUALITY & DIVERSITY STRATEGY: APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING TO MEET HIGHER RECRUITMENT TARGETS |
| LEAD OFFICER | Head of Human Resources Management and Development |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>(a) <i>that the Chief Fire Officer, following consultation with the Chair, be authorised to submit an application to the Department for Communities and Local Government for a share of the additional Capital Grant funding in relation to meeting higher recruitment targets, subject to receipt of written confirmation of the conditions of the grant and assurance that these can be met by the Authority;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>that, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.</i></p> |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | <p>At its last meeting the Authority was informed of publication of the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality & Diversity Strategy and the implications of this both for the Authority and the Service. Elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting is a draft Corporate Single Equality Scheme intended to assist both the Authority and the Service in meeting its obligations under the Strategy.</p> <p>Part of the Strategy referred to an undertaking by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to make available, in 2009/10 or 2010/11, a minimum of £42,000 in capital grant to those Fire and Rescue Authorities willing to make a commitment to achieving higher recruitment targets as set out in the Strategy.</p> <p>Further details of this grant were announced at a recent CLG workshop and are set out in this report.</p> |
| FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS | Successful application for the Grant should secure the Authority a minimum of £42,000 additional funding for use in seeking to meet higher recruitment targets as specified in the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy. |
| APPENDICES | |
| LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy. 2. Report DSFRA/08/16 (National Equality and Diversity Equality Strategy 2008 – 18) to the meeting of the Authority held on 31 July 2008. |

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 As reported to the Authority at its last meeting, the recently-published National Equality and Diversity Strategy sets out the measures by which every Fire and Rescue Authority's performance on equality and diversity would be assessed. One of the measures is an assessment of progress against workforce diversity targets. Paragraph 7.5 of the Strategy states that:

“The targets to be met by each Fire and Rescue Authority are:

- (a) By 2013, a minimum of 15 per cent of new entrants to the operational sector to be women.***
- (b) By 2013, recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.***
- (c) Fire and Rescue Authorities with very low minority ethnic working age populations and low recruitment requirements may set a target in terms of individuals recruited over the five year period rather than a percentage of total recruitment.***
- (d) By 2013, parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women.”***

1.2 Paragraph 7.9 of the Strategy goes on to state:-

“The targets set out at paragraph 7.5 are the minimum required under the National Framework. To encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to strive for more rapid improvement in the diversity of their workforce, Communities and Local Government [CLG] will allocate an additional capital grant payment to those Fire and Rescue Authorities that commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets. Those higher targets will be 18 per cent for women in the operational sector and between 2 and 5 per cent above the local working age population for minority ethnic staff across all sections of the Service

A minimum of £42,000 in capital grant will be allocated in 2009/10 or 2010/11 to those Fire and Rescue Authorities which make a commitment to achieving the following targets:

- By 2013 a minimum of 18% of new entrants to the operational service to be women***
- By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at 2 to 5% above the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.***

2. CURRENT SITUATION WITHIN THE DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

2.1 Currently the percentages of operational female and minority ethnic staff are:-

- operational staff who are women 3.9%**
- Staff of minority ethnic background 0.4%**

2.2 These figures are a percentage of the work force, rather than a reflection of the working age population.

- 2.3 All staff are currently being asked to undertake Equality Monitoring to give the Service an even clearer idea of the true demographic make up of our staff profile.
- 2.4 CLG will be supplying the Service with information derived from the Labour Force Survey to enable the Service to have clear understanding of exactly what the ethnicity and gender of the working age population is in its area and at various levels under that (e.g. by district of ward). This information will be used to establish appropriate targets for the Service which it is hoped will meet the enhanced targets set out in the National Equality and Diversity Strategy.

3. ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING

- 3.1 On 17 September 2008, the Service Equality & Diversity Advisor attended a CLG-run workshop on the issue of setting recruitment targets in line with the National Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- 3.2 A key part of that workshop was to address the issue of additional funding, as set out in Paragraph 7.9 of the Strategy (see paragraph 1.2 above).
- 3.3 CLG advised at the workshop that details of each fire and rescue authority's targets would in future be published in an annual Equality and Diversity Strategy Report. A Circular will shortly be issued setting out, amongst other things, the timetable leading to the publication of the report. The circular will advise fire and rescue authorities of when they will need to provide CLG with details of their proposed local minority ethnic recruitment targets.
- 3.4 CLG went on to advise that, to receive the additional grant payment, fire and rescue authorities need only at this stage to make written commitment to CLG to the achieve the higher recruitment targets. This written commitment should be received by mid-November. Again, a further circular is expected to confirm the precise details of application for the additional funding and will, subject to its receipt in time, be reported to the Authority meeting. To date, CLG has stipulated that:-
- It is up to each fire and rescue service (FRS) as to how it feels it can best make use of the additional funding money;
 - The money comes with "no strings attached" in terms of how the money is to be used. There will be no specific reporting and accounting protocols associated with the grant;
 - It will not be taken back by CLG if the targets are not fully achieved. However, the fact that an FRS has been awarded the grant will be published and the Audit Commission will look for evidence of what is being done with the grant to achieve the higher recruitment targets;
 - The targets will be set by each FRS within the context of both the demographic stats of the 2001 Census and the Labour Force Survey (see paragraph 2.4 above);
 - The ethnicity targets do not just include those from "visible" ethnic groups (e.g. Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Bangladeshi) but also those groups who identify as "White other" – particularly from Eastern Europe;
 - The actual format and information in the application letter to CLG does not have to identify (at this stage) an in-depth, fully structured business case for the grant – only that the Service is prepared to make a "*commitment to the achievement of the higher recruitment targets*"

- The total pot of money available for this from CLG is finite. Thus, the quantity of money that an FRS will get will be dependant on the number of FRS's applying for the pot of money – i.e. the fewer FRS's that apply, then the larger each individual grant will be. If all FRS's apply it means that the grant will be £42,000 per Service.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 It is considered that the achievement of the higher targets is something that the Service should aspire to. Receipt of additional funding from CLG in this respect will serve not only to assist the Service in meeting the targets but will also send a clear indication of its willingness to seek to achieve the higher targets.
- 4.2 The implementation of “Making the Connections” (The Corporate Single Equality Scheme) and its 3-year action plan will include a range of projects, activities and corporate “behaviours” that the Service will be doing in pursuance of these targets
- 4.3 Whilst those “projects, activities and corporate behaviours” have yet to be formalised and the statistical information spoken to support them has yet to be fully assessed, it needs to be stressed that, at this stage, the application letter to CLG for additional funding has only to state that the Service is willing to make a “*commitment to the achievement of the higher recruitment targets*”
- 4.4 In light of this it is recommended that, subject to receipt of written clarification of the application criteria (and to an appropriate assurance that the Service will be able to meet these), the Chief Fire Officer (in consultation with the Chair to the Authority) be authorised to apply to CLG for additional funding to meet the higher recruitment targets as set out in the National Equality and Diversity Strategy.

JANE SHERLOCK
Head of Human Resources Management and Development