

# DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	HRMDC/08/6
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>12 SEPTEMBER 2008</b>
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	<b>CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME.</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>Head of Human Resources Management and Development</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<p><i>(a) To note the contents of this briefing</i></p> <p><i>(b) To endorse the title of the Corporate Equality Scheme as "Making The Connections"</i></p> <p><i>(c) For a member of HRMD to be identified to work with the Equality &amp; Diversity team on the development and implementation of this Scheme</i></p>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>At the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 31 July 2008, the requirements of the National Equality &amp; Diversity Strategy were outlined. It was agreed at that meeting that the Human Resources Management and Development (HRMD) Committee would have</p> <p>(a) responsibility for the Strategy on behalf of the Authority and;</p> <p>(b) that a member (or members) of HRMD should provide a lead role in relation to Equality &amp; Diversity issues.</p> <p>The Corporate Equality Scheme that will link with the National Equality &amp; Diversity Strategy is currently being completed</p> <p>Equality and Diversity is still not seen as fully embedded within DSFRS. During discussion on this aspect, the phrase "Making The Connections" was felt to be a simple and identifiable title for the Corporate Equality Scheme</p> <p>The Scheme will be linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSFRS Corporate Plan</li> <li>• Departmental and Area business plans</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	None
<b>APPENDICES</b>	None
<b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	None

## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the DFRA meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, the requirements of the National Equality & Diversity Strategy were outlined. It was agreed at that meeting HRMD Committee would have responsibility for the Strategy on behalf of the Authority and that a member (or members) HRMD should provide a lead role in relation to Equality & Diversity issues.
- 1.2 This paper sets out what is currently being done in relation to the Strategy and the future plans and actions linked to the Strategy.

## 2 **BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2006 establishes the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC will bring together the Commission for Racial Equality, The Disability Rights Commission and The Equal Opportunities Commission from October 2007. It will take on all of the powers of the individual Commissions as well as new powers to enforce legislation more effectively and promote equality for all.
- 2.2 Public Authorities such as Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service are now required, by duties placed upon us, to promote Equality and Diversity within everything that we do.
- 2.3 In order to comply with the duties placed upon public authorities by legislation DSFRS are required have equality schemes in place for gender, race and disability.
- 2.4 Guidelines produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission recommend that a Single Equality Scheme is produced that encompasses all 6 strands (gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief).
- 2.5 The Fire & Rescue National Framework Document 2008-11 and the Equality & Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 require evidence on the development and implementation of policies which support and promote equality and diversity.
- 2.6 Priority 2a of the 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. This Single Equality Scheme will be a significant driver to achieving that target.

## 3. **HOW WILL THE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME HELP TO ACHIEVE PRIORITY 2A?**

3.1 It 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).

4. **WHAT PLANS AND PROJECTS ARE ALREADY RUNNING THAT WILL LINK WITH THIS THE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME1**

4.1 The Equality & Diversity Unit already are already managing 8 projects (at various stages of beginning, half-way through or near completion) that will provide the foundations and on-going progress of the 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

5. **AT WHAT STAGE IS THE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME DOCUMENT?**

5.1 The basic framework for the document is in place and some consultation has already been undertaken.

6. **WHAT WILL BE THE NEXT STEPS?**

6.1 At the last Authority meeting it was agreed that a specific Authority member should be identified as “championing” Equality & Diversity on behalf of the Authority. This development work on the Single Equality Scheme provides a unique and specific opportunity for such a member to become involved.

6.2 A series of meetings with middle and senior managers has been organised to gain input to fully develop the action plan for the next 3 years.

6.3 A rough draft document will be ready for presentation to SMB and The Authority by the end of October.

7 **THE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME NEEDS A CORPORATE “BRANDING”**

7.1 Equality and Diversity is still not seen as fully embedded within DSFRS. During discussion on this aspect, the phrase “Making The Connections” was felt to be a simple and identifiable title for the Corporate Equality Scheme

**JANE SHERLOCK**

**Head of Human Resources Management and Development**