

**SUBJECT: STRETCH TARGETS – NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2008-2018**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 As Members will recall, the Department of Communities and Local Government published the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018, in June 2008. This strategy document was considered by the Authority at the 16 June 2008 meeting which resulted in Members agreeing to the principle of setting stretch targets in respect of diversifying the workforce. (Minute 14(ii) 2008 refers).
- 1.2 With the necessary data relating to the employment profile of under-represented groups in Tyne and Wear now having been made available, this report sets out, for the consideration of the Committee, specific stretch targets in respect of women and members of the black and ethnic communities.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The national Equality and Diversity Strategy is designed to guide and support every Fire and Rescue Authority to deliver an effective service to everyone in the community and to treat all employees with fairness, dignity and respect. To this end, the Strategy sets out five priorities, namely;
- Leadership and Promoting Inclusion.
  - Accountability.
  - Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement.
  - Employment and Training.
  - Evaluation and sharing good practice.
- 2.2 In tandem with pursuing these broad priorities, Authorities are also expected to deliver on specific targets (detailed in sections 4 and 5 below). The strategy also identifies a range of commitment and goal statements, with key elements of these relating directly to the targets. These statements include;
- Our workforce better reflects the communities we serve.
  - We encourage talented people from all parts of the community to join us and reach their potential.
  - The Fire and Rescue Service values and supports a diverse workforce through our commitment to fair and transparent recruitment and employment policies, practices and processes.

## PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

- Recruitment of minority ethnic employees is at the same percentage or higher than the representation of the working age population.
- Recruitment of women in the operational sector is at least 15 per cent and rising.
- Levels of retention and progression for employees from all backgrounds, and between men and women, are comparable.

2.3 To enable the Authority to effectively consider the requirements and set appropriate stretch targets it has been necessary to access and analyse the profile of under-represented groups within Tyne and Wear.

### 3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

3.1 In considering the demographic profile of Tyne and Wear in relation to the CLG's, stretch target definitions the data which is important relates to those falling within the 'working age' of the population. This population is defined by the UK Statistics Authority as:

- Males aged 16\* – 64 years.
- Females aged 16\* – 59 years.

*\*It must be noted that when considering demographic data for Firefighter recruitment, the Authority requires an individual to be **18 or over** to be employed as a Firefighter.*

3.2 Taking this into account the following statistics have been extracted from the Office of National Statistics, annual population survey, 2007.

3.3 The total working age population living in the county currently stands at 679,500.

3.4 Of the working age population living within Tyne and Wear, the following statistics regarding the under-represented groups have been identified:

- The number of **working age women** is 325,900, equating to **48%** of the local working age population.
- The number of individuals from **working age minority ethnic** groups is 32,000, equating to **4.7%** of the local working age population.

### 4 TARGETS

4.1 The national Equality and Diversity Strategy sets out recruitment targets to be met by each Fire and Rescue Authority, which are the minimum requirements under the national framework namely;

- By 2013, a minimum of 15 per cent of new entrants to the operational sector to be women.

- 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.
- 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.
- By 2013 parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women.

4.2 As highlighted above, the targets set out above are the *minimum required* under the National Framework.

### 5 STRETCH TARGETS

5.1 To encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to strive for more rapid improvement in the diversity of their workforce, CLG will allocate an additional capital grant payment to those Authorities that commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets.

5.2 The higher targets outlined within the Strategy state:

- 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.

### 6 PROPOSAL

6.1 As noted earlier, the Authority had already committed in principle to the adoption of stretch targets, which are aimed at diversifying the workforce through recruitment from under-represented communities.

6.2 In proposing specific stretch targets for this Authority, consideration has been given to a range of dependencies, including workforce composition, staff turnover, previous positive action programmes and budgetary requirements.

6.3 Consequently, in support of this commitment and to help encourage innovation, it is proposed that Authority formally adopts the stretch **target of 18% for new women entrants** joining the operational service.

6.4 Furthermore, in proposing a stretch target for minority ethnic groups, consideration has been given to the demographic data highlighted in 3.4.2 above, indicating that this group represents 4.7% of the local working age population, and additionally, the CLG stretch target band of 2% to 5% above the local working population, as indicated above.

## **PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING**

- 6.5 With due consideration to the above, it is proposed that the Authority sets a **target of 8% for the recruitment of new entrants from minority ethnic staff** into the Service, which when considered across all employee groups, is a challenging target but achievable target.
- 6.6 It is recommended that the above stretch targets are adopted as the minimum requirement for this Authority and it is further proposed that the targets remain under review with the consideration that where good progress is being made, the targets are revised accordingly.
- 6.7 Further to the report of June 2008 where the Authority agreed in principle to commit to the stretch targets, Communities and Local Government have indicated that Authority's committing to the stretch targets must confirm their intentions formally by 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008. If approved, the Chief Fire Officer will ensure the appropriate application is made.

### **7 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 This Fire and Rescue Authority has both general and specific legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and employees. Penalties for breaking the law, whether as individuals or as an organisation can be severe. Failure to comply with the legal requirements will:
- Reduce our ability to protect and serve the community.
  - Cause detriment to our employees, who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential, and
  - Damage the standing and reputation of the Service.

### **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 For Fire and Rescue Authorities who make a commitment to achieving the targets, a minimum of £42,000 in capital grant will be allocated in 2009/10 or 2010/11. It is likely that such funding will be phased over two years.
- 8.2 In addition the Chief Fire Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary resources and expertise to meet these challenging targets are made available within the organisation.

### **9 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The responsibility for delivering change rests with:
- At national level: Local Government Association, Chief Fire Officers Association, representative bodies, Audit Commission and Communities and Local Government
  - At local level: the members of each Fire and Rescue Authority, the Chief Fire Officer, senior employees and representative bodies
  - Individual Fire and Rescue Service employees

- 9.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities have to ensure that their Integrated Risk Management Plans and all other plans, policies, practices and procedures are effectively equality impact assessed and appropriate action is taken to remove or mitigate any adverse impact.
- 9.3 Fire and Rescue Authorities have to produce and review at least annually an action plan for implementation of the Strategy and report on progress.
- 9.4 Finally, it will be necessary to provide the CLG, on an annual basis, with evidence of progress on the equality and diversity agenda for publication in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report with they will produce each year.

## **10 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no specific H&S implications with the proposal.

## **11 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Consider and comment on the adoption of the stretch targets as detailed in this report;
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008 – 2011