

SUBJECT: NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2009

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is to provide Members with an overview of the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report published in March 2009. It highlights key findings and notable good practice across the national fire and rescue service with a focus on the Authority's performance against national equality and diversity targets.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In May 2008 the National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 was published. The Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report 2009 is the first annual report which highlights progress made over the last year towards the National Strategy.

3 NATIONAL REPORT: OVERVIEW

3.1 The report is divided into five sections:

- Section 1 Sets report in context in line with National Strategy and Audit Commission's Performance Assessment 2008.
- Section 2 Reports on some key national initiatives including details of the 2008 Equality and Diversity Award winning initiatives.
- Section 3 Details The National Action Plan which identifies initiatives that stakeholders have committed to progress in 2009-10.
- Section 4 Local recruitment targets set by each fire and rescue service in England published for the first time.
- Section 5 An overview of current performance on equality and diversity in the fire and rescue services in England and of each individual Service.

Below sets out the content of each section of the report, and a full copy will be available to Members at the meeting.

4 SECTION 1: CONTEXT

4.1 As indicated in 2.1 above this report is a key component that follows on from the National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 which sets out the vision and strategy for fire and rescue services under five headings:

- Leadership and promoting inclusion
- Accountability
- Effective service delivery and community engagement
- Employment and training
- Evaluation and sharing good practice

5 SECTION 2: NATIONAL INITIATIVES

5.1 The Report outlines national initiatives, conferences and seminars to support equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service which have been sponsored, developed and promoted by the national bodies since the launch of the Strategy including:

5.2 **Local Government Association Charter** - Five point Equality and Diversity Charter for Authority Members requiring a personal commitment to improving equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service. A significant number of Authority Members have already signed up to the Charter.

5.3 **High Potential Development Scheme** - This scheme, currently in the development stage, sets out to attract talented individuals into the Service who more closely reflect the diversity of the local community, whilst not excluding those already employed by the service. A pilot of the scheme will be carried out with a number of fire and rescue services during 2009-10.

5.4 **Minority ethnic fire safety campaign** - The on-going "Fire Kills" campaign continues to target activity aimed at raising awareness of key fire safety issues within minority ethnic communities. This year the campaign aimed at the Polish community grew significantly and it has expanded further to include Pakistani and Bangladeshi television advertisements.

5.5 **Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Awards** - This scheme is designed to promote equality and diversity and the integration of the service into the community focusing on creativity, innovation and good practice and providing recognition of commitment and endeavor. The three award categories are: Leadership; Service Delivery; and Partnership Working.

5.5.1 In the National Report there are details of winners and runners-up for the 2008 Awards. Members may wish to note that the Authority's Catering Manager received runner-up in the National Equality and Diversity Awards 2008. This was for the work carried out to overcome significant disability, to facilitate a comprehensive process of rehabilitation, adjustment and a return to work programme.

6 SECTION 3: 2009 NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 The National Action Plan provides details of the activities, initiatives and commitments being made by the National Equality and Diversity Delivery Partnership (CLG, Local Government Association, Chief Fire Officers' Association, Fire Brigades Union, UNISON, Quality and Diversity Stakeholder Group) with the aim of implementing an effective national approach to delivery against the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- 6.2 Within this section the National Action Plan is split up into the five key strategic priorities as highlighted in paragraph 4.1, with lead bodies assigned to specific actions.
- 6.3 Each fire authority is required to develop, or will already have developed, its own local Action Plan. This Authority has completed the plan and continues to monitor progress against actions in its regional and local action plans. Details of the progress made against the National Action Plan is attached at Appendix A and the regional position at Appendix B for the information of Members.

7 SECTION 4: RECRUITMENT TARGETS

- 7.1 In line with the National Strategy fire and rescue services were required to apply national targets for retention and progression and set local targets with regard to recruitment of women into their operational sector and for minority ethnic staff across all sections of their workforce.
- 7.2 Members will recall that this Authority demonstrated a clear commitment to equality and diversity by electing to work towards the stretch targets (minute no. 3 of 2008 refers), namely:
- By 2013 a minimum of **18%** of new entrants to the operational service to be women.
 - By 2013 a minimum of 8% of new entrants across the whole organisation to be from minority ethnic backgrounds (revised as detailed in 7.3 below).
- 7.3 A subsequent report was presented to Members (minute no. 79 of 2008 refers), and an additional stretch target with regard to the BME communities for this Authority was endorsed as:
- By 2013 a minimum of **9.2%** of new entrants across the whole organisation to be from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 7.4 Twenty-nine fire authorities (out of 45) endorsed the stretch targets for BME employees and thirty-six fire authorities endorsed the stretch target for female entrants.
- 7.5 Fire authorities provided details of the measures they plan to take to support the achievement of their targets and CLG will require authorities to provide qualitative information on these initiatives, in addition to the statistical data, for subsequent annual Equality and Diversity Reports in order to demonstrate how they have achieved improvements in their performance.

8 SECTION 5: CURRENT NATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- 8.1 The 2009 National Equality and Diversity Report provides an analysis of Equality and Diversity performance based upon statistical returns provided annually to the CLG and Local Government by all fire authorities. The focus of this year's report is performance with regards to employment issues.
- 8.2 At March 31 2008, fire authorities in England employed 47,685 men and 7,852 women (of which 1,503 worked in operational roles). In addition, 3,078 members of staff were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 8.3 White men continued to constitute the vast majority of the workforce:
- Women were 14 per cent of the total workforce but only 3.3 per cent of the operational sector.
 - Minority ethnic staff were 5.5 per cent of the total workforce.
- 8.4 Of the 55,537 staff employed by the fire and rescue service in England less than 1.5 per cent (i.e. 809) have declared a disability. However, eight fire authorities did not provide statistical returns on this.
- 8.5 Over the last four years there has been a steady increase in the number of women who have been successful in the Firefighter recruitment process (5.1 per cent in 2004-05 rising to 9.2 per cent in 2007/08).
- 8.6 Minority ethnic recruits comprised nearly 8% of all those who joined the Service in 2007-08. (10% of all applicants to the service were from minority ethnic backgrounds; 80% were white and 10% were "Not Stated").
- 8.7 In terms of progression, at 31 March 2008, 83% of women were at Firefighter level compared with 66% of men, whilst 1.3% of women were at a Station Manager level compared to 3.8% of men. Only four women were recorded as being at Brigade Manager level. 2008 data indicates that the proportions of minority ethnic staff and white staff represented in management roles are broadly in line except at Brigade Management level.
- 8.8 In 2007-08 women and staff from minority ethnic background have not left the operational sector at appreciably higher rates than white men.
- 8.9 The Authority is working to improve performance in relation to the recruitment of BMEs and has achieved the highest performance of the metropolitan fire and rescue authorities in relation to female Firefighters, again exceeding the target set.
- 8.10 The report highlights a general direction towards greater diversity but at the present time this is more evident at junior levels of fire authorities than in middle or senior management levels. Whilst issues of low turnover affect the rate at which fire authorities can recruit, limiting the rate of the overall improvement in diversity, much more needs to be done by all fire authorities to encourage and support women and minority ethnic staff to progress to middle and senior management roles particularly in the operational sector.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Currently there are no specific financial implications arising by virtue of this report however members are advised that there may be some financial implications as we continue to work towards the national strategy, and these will be covered in any future reports.

10 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The National Equality and Diversity report 2009 highlights progress fire authorities have made against the National Strategy supporting the service in striving to become a fully inclusive organisation, championing equality and diversity in all aspects of its work.

10.2 This Authority continues in the proactive working towards stretch targets and developing initiatives to improve its performance against the National Strategy having a positive impact on equality and fairness across the Service.

11 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no additional or direct Health and Safety implications.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT

12.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

13 RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate
- b) Endorse the actions taken towards the National Strategy;
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Communities for Local Government Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report 2009. (attached)

Communities for Local Government Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018. (available on request).

Creating the Safest Community