

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 05**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 8 JULY 2013**

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**SUBJECT: EQUALITY PEER CHALLENGE RESULTS**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the results of the Authority's Equality Peer Challenge against the 'excellent' level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The FRS Equality Framework is designed to enable fire and rescue services to measure their performance in relation to equality. It has three levels; 'developing', 'achieving' and 'excellent'. A formal assessment is required in order to achieve 'excellent' status. Further background information can be found in the HR Committee report of 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 2.2 In August 2012 the Authority undertook a mock challenge. Recommendations from this exercise were progressed to further prepare for the formal process and in February 2013, the Authority submitted a narrative, self-assessment and case studies, presenting its case for 'excellent'.
- 2.3 The peer challenge, organised by the Local Government Association, was carried out by trained peers and involved an assessment of the Authority's own self-assessment and a three day on-site challenge. This took place between 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and involved the peer team undertaking a series of interviews and focus groups with employees, Members and other stakeholders.
- 2.4 The peer team announced the results of the challenge at the final feedback presentation.

## **3. PEER CHALLENGE RESULTS**

- 3.1 Following a rigorous and intensive process, the peer team awarded the Authority 'excellent' status. A certificate has been received and the FRS Equality Framework 'excellent' logo can be used to promote the Authority's success and further demonstrate its on-going commitment to equality and inclusion. An article was included in the local press on 14<sup>th</sup> June which can be accessed via <http://www.washingtonstar.co.uk/news/local/brigade-one-of-the-best-in-land-1-5681510>
- 3.2 A report summarising the findings of the challenge has been drafted by the peer team and is currently in the process of being finalised. In the report, the peer team expressed their

appreciation for the support and hospitality provided during their visit and commented on the outcomes being achieved- "Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service is committed to equality and diversity as a means of reducing the risks for the most vulnerable within its community and preventing deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic incidents."

- 3.3 As well as identifying some areas for consideration to assist the Authority in improving further, the peer team highlighted some examples of innovative projects and initiatives such as; SafetyWorks!, South Tyneside Homes delivering Home Fire Safety Checks and the broad range of communication media used to inform the community. They were also particularly impressed by the strong leadership and management in place throughout the organisation.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 An article is currently being prepared for Fire magazine for the July/August issue.
- 4.2 Once the peer challenge report is finalised, it will be published both internally and externally. An improvement action plan will be developed to include the areas for consideration identified by the peer team and a presentation of the results will be provided to managers and key employees to assist in shaping the plan. Further consultation will be carried out to finalise the improvement action plan.

#### **5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

#### **6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Achieving the 'excellent' level of the FRS Equality framework demonstrates the Authority's on-going commitment to equality for all. The Authority will be recognised as an ambassador for equality, on a journey of continuous improvement, promoting equality and inclusion in all areas of its business. The improvements that will be achieved through further development around the equality and inclusion agenda, steered by the Peer Challenge results, will benefit our diverse communities of Tyne and Wear and all employees of TWFRS.

#### **7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- a) Note the content of this report;
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.