APPENDIX C - EMBEDDING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY PRINCIPLES WITHIN PROCUREMENT PROCESSES AND DECISIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been developed as an integral part of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority(the Authority) Procurement Strategy. It documents how we ensure our strong diversity and equality principles are practically implemented through our procurement processes and embedded in the procurement decisions we make. This document shall be used as both a guide for procurers when undertaking future procurements and a record of our achievements. Pre-planned and periodic review of this document, in accordance with the wider review of the Authority's Procurement Strategy, will ensure continuous improvement and development in this area.
- 1.2 Our suppliers are integral to meeting our strategic objectives as a fire and rescue service. Effective processes ensure we procure fit for purposesolutions from third parties, whilst securing value for money for the tax payer. Our suppliers act as an extension to us as a service provider and therefore it is important to ensure stringent supplier selection processes incorporate, and do not compromise, ourapproach to diversity and equality.
- 1.3 The designing of our procurement processes introduce us to a number of opportunities to further our commitment to diversity and equality. This includes drafting our requirements in a manner that ensures the goods, services and works we procure are suitable for every environment and for use by everyone. It also includes using our influence as a buyer to improve diversity and equality standards within our supply chain by education and careful supplier selection.
- 1.4 To ensure this document and our subsequent approach to procurement delivers practical and tangible improvements and benefits an ambitious action plan has been developed and published within the Authority's Equality Strategy. This action plan is also documented within Appendix A of this document.

2. PROCUREMENT AND EQUALITY - WORKING TOGETHER

- 2.1 The Authority's Procurement Strategy and Equality Strategy work together to support the objectives of one another. The Authority recognises that good procurement processes compliment and work directly in support of our commitment to diversity and equality. EU Directives on public sector procurement direct us to treat our suppliers fairly and equally. Furthermore the directives require us to remove any barriers any suppliers may face in bidding for contracting opportunities, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Black Minority Ethnic (BMEs) suppliers.
- 2.2 Our procurement processes afford us the opportunity to develop our commitment to diversity and equality both internally and external. An example

of internal development includes undertaking equality impact assessments of our requirements to ensure the goods, services and works we procure are suitable and inclusive. An example of external development is educating our suppliers on diversity and equality to improve standards in our supply chain using our spending power as leverage.

3. PROACTIVELY REMOVING BARRIERS TO CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.1 An important role of a public sector procurer in the spending of tax payer's money, particularly through times of austerity, to is support economic growth. One of the primary ways the Authority can fulfil this responsibility is by supporting small and medium enterprises (SME's) by removing barriers to them tendering for public sector contracts. The Authority does this by attending local "Meet the Buyer" events organised to bring public sector procurers and SME's together. This allows the procurer an opportunity to understand the difficulties SMEs face in tendering for public sector contracts and allows SMEs to learn about public sector procurement processes. Furthermore information has been developed to provide suppliers with guidance on how to do business with the Authority.
- 3.2 In addition the Authority also recognises the importance of ensuring the supply base reflects the diversity of the Tyne and Wear population. "Meet the Buyer" events are also targeted at improving engagement with Black Minority Ethnic (BME) suppliers. The Authority proactively work to ensure barriers preventing BME's for tendering for contracting opportunities are identified and removed.
- 3.3 In June 2012the Authority hosted and participated in an event with the North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO). One of the objectives of the event was to provide an opportunity for procurers from North East Authorities to meet with suppliers and the third sector. The event gave procurers an opportunity to educate suppliers and the third sector on their procurement processes and the legislation that governs such processes. It also gave both the suppliers and the third sector an opportunity to discuss with procurers the barriers they face in tendering for contracting opportunities and introduced procurers to potential solutions. The feedback from the event was excellent and demonstrates the Authority's commitment not only to improve their own procurement processes but that of procurers from local partner organisations.
- 3.4 SME's frequently identify the resource required to respond to a public sector tender as a barrier for them bidding for contracts. SME's often state the tender process is time consuming, resource intensive and bureaucratic. In response to this the Authority has worked with regional authorities to develop and implement harmonised procurement documentation. This has resulted in the majority of north east authorities using the same pre-qualification questionnaires and invitation to tender documents thereby reducing the resource required by SME's to participate in contracting opportunities.

4. PROCUREMENT PROCESSES – DEFINING REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 The Authority led on the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Uniform and Uniform Accessories on behalf of the four north east fire and rescue authorities. A diverse focus group was constituted to contribute to the development of garment specifications. When the specifications were completed in draft the Regional Procurement Officer Group met with the Regional Equality Group to undertake an equality impact assessment on each of the specifications. This approach led to an amendment of the draft specification which resulted in a contract for the provision of PPE, Uniform and Uniform Accessories suitable for the workforce of all four fire and rescue authorities. The approach also specifically resulted in the development of a wider range of garment sizing, special measures, male and female specific PPE, enhanced maternity provision and a garment range to suit various religions.
- 4.2 The Authority undertook a procurement process for replacement self-contained breathing apparatus in 2009. Included within the specification was the requirement for the successful tenderer to invest resources in research for development of a facemask that can be safely worn by someone with facial hair without a detrimental impact of the performance or protection of the product. This is an example of the Authority shaping the market place to achieve diversity related objectives by ensuring the PPE procured is suitable for wearers from all religions.

5. PROCUREMENT PROCESSES – SUPPLIER SELECTION

- 5.1 When sourcing suppliers and awarding contracts of a significant value an investigation and evaluation of a supplier's diversity and equality principles are of primary importance. Contracts are awarded by the Authority to suppliers with a demonstrable record of achieving high standards in diversity and equalitythereby demonstrating confidence that selected suppliers will further the Authority's own commitment to diversity and equality in the delivery of contracts.
- 5.2 The Authority use pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQ) to shortlist suitably qualified and experienced suppliers to tender for provision of goods, services and works. The PPQ documents are backward looking and investigate a suppliers past performance. Incorporated within the PQQ document is a section on diversity and equality which suppliers are required to complete. This section is pass or fail therefore should a supplier not have sufficient measures in place to demonstrate a commitment to diversity and equality or, should the supplier have poor past performance or convictions in this area, they will not be invited to tender.
- 5.3 When inviting tenders the Authority also consider whether diversity and equality related evaluation criteria can be incorporated within the wider evaluation process subject to such criteria being relevant to the subject area of the contract.

6. PROCURMENT PROCESSES – CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Through contract management and engaging with suppliers aneed was identified to support the supply base with training and education in diversity and equality ensuring high standards are sustained. Therefore the Authority held the first Supplier Briefing event in partnership with Assessment North East in November 2011 whereby suppliers were invited to a briefing on diversity and equality providing the opportunity to reinforce our commitment. and therefore our supplier's commitment, to achieving and improving on our standards. The event was used to educate our suppliers on their responsibilities and direct them to further support if required. The feedback from our suppliers confirmed the event was a success and has led to some of our suppliers seeking to build upon their diversity and equality practices with the support of both the Authority and Assessment North East. Due to this success further events are being planned and further communication will continue to be issued to our suppliers ensuring further support and commitment.
- 6.2 The Authorityalso conducts formal contract management meetings with strategic suppliers. This approach to contract management is currently under development and when completed will include adding "Diversity and Equality Issues" into a standardised agenda to ensure any equality issues associated with the delivery of a contract are addressed. It also ensures that the standards which the supplier achieved to be awarded the contract in the first instance are upheld throughout the contract life.

7. REVIEW OF OUR PROCESSES AND THEIR IMPACT

- 7.1 The Procurement Strategy is frequently reviewed to ensure both the content is up to date and is successfully meeting organisational objectives. The next review will include within the scope both the harmonised pre-qualification questionnaire and invitation to tender documentation.
- 7.2 Regular reviewsof the procurement processes and their impact are undertaken on an ad-hoc basis to support changes in legislation, to adhere to best practice and to ensure continuous improvement. A recent example of this is the documentation developed to support the approach to business continuity.

8. CASE STUDY

- 8.1 The brief case study is provided below as one example to demonstrate thepractical application of equality and diversity principles through the procurement processes. The case study documents benefits achieved from attending "Meet the Buyer" events.
- 8.2 Procurement staff attended an event in June 2011 and met the Managing Director of the Environmental Academy, aSmall and Medium Enterprise (SME) based locally in Gateshead. The meeting allowed staffto better understand the challenges the Environmental Academy faced in tendering for public sector contracts, and identified to the Environmental Academy where contracting opportunities were advertised and also familiarised them with the

procurement process the Authority would use. As a result of the meeting a procurement process was developed which would remove barriers to SMEs tendering for contracts, as identified by the Environmental Academy, whilst also ensuring the process remained fair and transparent. The outcome was the Environmental Academy were successful in a procurement process to deliver an Environmental E-Learning tool to the Authority.

APPENDIX A -EQUALITY ACTION PLAN (PROCUREMENT RELATED ACTIONS)

Equality Objective & Actions	Responsible Manager & Target Completion	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Evidence of actions completed to date, documents, etc.	Comments relating to the action. Note if slippage or change to target.
1. By 2014, to incorporate equality and diversity criteria into procurement processes and documentation to ensure new contracts are awarded to suppliers that are compliant with the Equality Act 2010.	AM Strategic Planning, Risk and Assets Procurement Services Manager						
1.1 Review and amend the Service's Pre-Qualification Questionnaire to include appropriate equality related questions to allow effective evaluation of a tenderers compliance with the Equality Act 2010.	March 2014					See PQQ	None
1.2 Ensure processes are in place, for all significant procurements, to identify and incorporate equality and diversity criteria into both specifications and tender evaluation processes.	March 2014					None	End of Mar 2013 is target for publishing Procurement Strategy

1.3 Incorporate equality and	March 2014			None	Work to start Jan 2013	İ
diversity considerations into						İ
formal contract management						İ
and supplier performance						İ
measurement processes.						İ

Equality Objective & Actions	Responsible Manager & Target Completion	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Evidence of actions completed to date, documents, etc.	Comments relating to the action. Note change to target and slippage reasons.
2. By 2014, provide 100% of our top 300 current suppliers with guidance and access to training to support them achieving and maintaining compliance to the Equality Act 2010.	AM Strategic Planning, Risk and Assets Procurement Services Manager						
2.1 Deliver a series of "Equality in Procurement" awareness sessions to our current suppliers to enhance knowledge and understanding.	March 2014					Event held, further events to be planned	Plan to attend future events
2.2 Write to each of our top 300 suppliers directing and encouraging them to access further training opportunities, if required, on their responsibilities with the Equality Act 2010.	March 2014						Plan to start after April 2013

Equality Objective & Actions	Responsible Manager & Target Completion	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Evidence of actions completed to date, documents, etc.	Comments relating to the action. Note change to target and slippage reasons.
3. By 2014, minimise and	AM Strategic						
remove any potential barriers	Planning Risk						
to Small and Medium	and Assets						
Enterprises (SMEs) and Black							
and Minority Ethnic (BME)	Procurement						
groups in bidding for our	Services						
contracts.	Manager						
3.1 The Service to be	March 2014					Event attended in Sept	None
represented at 'meet the buyer'	(annual					2012	
events focussed on educating	reoccurring						
SMEs and BMEs on	target)						
successfully tendering for							
Service contracts.							
3.2 The "How to do Business	March 2014						To start Jan 2013
with TWFRS" guide is updated							
and published on the internet.							

3.3 Equality and diversity	March 2014			None	End of Mar 2013 is target
principles, the Equality Act 2010					for publishing Procurement
and the Equality Action Plan					Strategy
2012 incorporated with the					
Service's Procurement					
Strategy.					