

SUBJECT: THE SINGLE EQUALITY STRATEGY

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the development of a Single Equality Strategy for the Authority.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As outlined in a report to Members in February 2011, the Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) and Single Equality Scheme (SES) were to be reviewed to take into account requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 In addition to the CEP and SES, the Authority's diversity and equality strategic aims / objectives are detailed in different sections of the Strategic Community Safety Plan and also referred to in the Authority's HR Strategy.
- 2.3 The Authority has maintained a clear commitment to diversity and equality and ensured the continued development of relevant documentation, however due to the volume and pace of change equality information has become somewhat fragmented.
- 2.4 As a result of the above, the Chief Fire Officer considered it appropriate to review diversity and equality strategic documentation and consider the need for a stand alone equality strategy.

3 REVIEW PROCESS

- 3.1 Focus groups explored the purpose of the CEP and SES as well as the aforementioned strategic documents.
- 3.2 Research was also carried out to determine best practice examples and it was identified that similar public sector organisations have one strategic document - A document that sets out the strategic aims and objectives in relation to diversity and equality, with a clear action plan for improvement for the organisation.
- 3.3 It was therefore established that the development of one overarching Single Equality Strategy that would incorporate the CEP and SES was required.
- 3.4 Not only is it considered best practice to have a separate diversity and equality strategy in place which provides clear direction and details all of the key priorities, policies and work streams around diversity and equality, but this

approach is in line with the current Governments' drive for greater transparency and a reduction in bureaucratic processes.

4 SINGLE EQUALITY STRATEGY

- 4.1 The Single Equality Strategy will focus on the key priority areas of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework and will include details of the additional protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 The Strategy will be a 4 year overarching document which will incorporate an equality action plan for the organisation. Progress against the action plan will be provided on an annual basis.
- 4.3 The Strategy will also detail the statistical data required under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This data will be refreshed on an annual basis in line with the action plan progress update.
- 4.4 The new Single Equality Strategy will be developed by the end of 2011 to ensure the Authority meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 Creating a Single Equality Strategy for the Authority will provide further clarity in relation to the Authority's strategic direction regarding diversity and equality.
- 5.2 If the review and amendment of the above documents was not carried out and a Single Equality Strategy was not developed there is a risk that diversity and equality aims, objectives and actions are not effectively aligned to the Authority's Strategic Plan.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A clear Single Equality Strategy incorporating the necessary information and action plans in respect of protected characteristics and changes as required under the Equality Act 2010 will lead to better outcomes for the Authority's diverse communities.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are recommended to:
 - a) Endorse the content of this report;
 - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority's Single Equality Scheme.
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority's Corporate Equality Plan.
- HR Committee Report, Review of Corporate Equality Plan and Single Equality Scheme, February 2011.

