

MEETING DATE: 15 DECEMBER 2008

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

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report sets out, for the information of Members, the stretch targets that have developed in accordance with Fire Service Circular 55/2008 Equality and Diversity Recruitment Targets.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. 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).
- 2.2. Further to that meeting, a report was presented at the Human Resources Committee on 27th October detailing the proposed stretch targets for workforce diversity, with specific regard to new Female and BME employees. Members approved the targets as set out below:
- The Authority formally adopted the stretch target of 18% for new women entrants joining the operational service by 2013.
 - The Authority formally adopted a target of 8% for the recruitment of new entrants from minority ethnic staff into the Service across all employee groups by 2013.
- 2.3. Members of the HR Committee were advised that the targets may need to be reviewed in the light of updated information being received from CLG which, at the time of reporting, had not been published.
- 2.4. New information was subsequently published and as anticipated the targets have been revised for new entrants from minority ethnic communities.
- 2.5. Due to reporting requirements of CLG, which required confirmation by 28th November 2008, a revision of the target has been undertaken and is presented in this report for endorsement by Members.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

3.1. The target set by the HR Committee for new entrants from minority ethnic communities was based upon the demographic profile of Tyne and Wear. This used data from the Office of National Statistics for citizens falling within the 'working age' of the population. This population is defined as:

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

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

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

3.3. With the circulation of FSC 55/08, CLG provided a data set which considered 'working age' population, however the definition differed from the Office of National Statistics definition, as detailed in 3.1 above. The CLG 'working age' population is defined as:

- individuals between the ages of 18 and 54

3.4. The FSC 55/08 also included data relating to the increases in local populations of people, principally from Eastern Europe, who identified themselves as "Other White" (as set out in the Census classifications).

3.5. With the inclusion of the "Other White" category as part of the recruitment target requirement, the revised figure for BME citizens within the Tyne and Wear area has increased to 39,430 equating to 7.2% of the revised '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.
- 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. REVISED STRETCH TARGET

6.1. In formulating the 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.

6.2. In setting the stretch target for minority ethnic groups, consideration has been given to the revised demographic data highlighted in 3.3 to 3.5 above, which identifies that this group represents 7.2% of the local working age population, as defined in FSC 05/08. Additionally, consideration has been given to the CLG stretch target band of “2% to 5% above the local working population”.

6.3. With due consideration to the above, it is proposed that the Authority endorse the revised **target of 9.2% for the recruitment of new entrants from minority ethnic staff** into the Service, which when considered across all employee groups, is a challenging but achievable target, and to confirm 18% for new women entrants.

6.4. 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.

6.5. Communities and Local Government required that Authorities formally confirm their commitment to the stretch targets by 28th November 2008. The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer have complied with this requirement stating commitment to the revised targets set out in this report.

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:

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- 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 Authority is recommended to:
- a) Endorse 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
- Fire Service Circular 55/08