

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 6**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 2 FEBRUARY 2015**

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**SUBJECT: STONEWALL WORKPLACE EQUALITY WEI 2015**

**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 result of the 2015 Stonewall Workplace Equality WEI (WEI) Top 100 employers.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 Since it was founded in 1989 Stonewall has worked ceaselessly to place sexual orientation equality in the mainstream political agenda and to achieve equality and justice for LGBT people.

2.2 Stonewall administers an annual WEI which benchmarks and ultimately showcases Britain's top gay friendly employers. The Authority participates in the WEI to review its approach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality.

2.3 In 2015 nearly 400 employers participated in the WEI, which covers 13.3m employees, making this year's the most competitive ranking ever. This included feedback from a total of 50,070 staff on questions of workplace attitude, access to information and number of visible gay and lesbian role models.

**3. WEI SUBMISSION PROCESS**

3.1 Taking part in the WEI involves completing an on-line questionnaire and providing supporting evidence, demonstrating how the Authority supports LGBT equality both in the workplace and community.

3.2 Stonewall assess employers' performance against 10 criteria including employee policy, training, employee network group, all-staff engagement, career development, line managers, monitoring, procurement, community engagement and additional work as well as feedback from employees.

3.3 The submission process is extremely thorough. Entries are marked by two teams and those organisations in the Top 100 are marked a third time to verify their score.

#### **4. NEW 2015 WEI**

- 4.1 Every year Stonewall review the WEI in terms of its design and scoring mechanism. Participation increases year on year making it an on-going challenge to attain a place in the Top 100. In 2015, following a comprehensive 5 year review of the process Stonewall launched a completely new WEI, considered far tougher than previous years.
- 4.2 In addition to streamlining the questionnaire, restricting qualitative input and minimising evidence requirements, Stonewall also significantly raised the bar by adjusting the benchmark. This year, organisations were required to achieve 110 points, out of a possible 200, to gain a position in the Top 100 (compared to 143 in 2014).

#### **5. WEI TOP 100 RESULTS**

- 5.1 The Authority has been placed in the Top 100 every year since first making it onto the list at 60<sup>th</sup> place in 2011. The Chief Fire Officer is pleased to report that in 2015 the Authority has again been recognised for its contribution to LGBT equality and inclusion and remains a Top 100 employer at 37<sup>th</sup> place. One of only four Fire and Rescue Services in the country in the Top 100, it continues to hold a place in Stonewall's list of top 5 emergency services at 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- 5.2 This year there has been a significant amount of movement in the WEI with many organisations achieving lower scores and as a result of the new process. Nottingham NHS Trust achieved 1<sup>st</sup> place and was the only organisation from last year's top 10 to feature in the top 10 this year. In terms of other FRSs, Cheshire achieved 31<sup>st</sup> place (moving down from 25<sup>th</sup> in 2014) and Devon and Somerset achieved 85<sup>th</sup> place (moving down from 54<sup>th</sup> in 2014).
- 5.3 The LGBT Staff Network group, a Stonewall Star Performing Network of 2014, continue to drive improvement. As well as assisting colleagues in other FRS, it has worked with South Tyneside Homes (STH) over recent years to share our good practice and provide advice on setting up and maintaining a LGBT network group. It is fantastic that STH have seen a great achievement this year moving up from 72<sup>nd</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup> place.
- 5.4 Members of the Network also use Stonewall's approach to assess performance in other areas of equality and are currently sharing experience and expertise to help set up and develop two new Staff Network groups to promote Gender and Black and Minority equality and inclusion.
- 5.5 The Authority continues to share excellent practice at a national level having recently featured in Stonewall's Workplace Guide for Line Managers: How to Manage a Diverse Workforce for its approach to delivering LGBT focussed unconscious bias training.
- 5.6 It is a real achievement to retain a place in the Top 100 particularly in such challenging times brought about by significant budget cuts and industrial action. In line with the Equality Peer Challenge feedback, the results this year reflect a more balanced approach to promoting all protected characteristics.
- 5.7 A feedback meeting will take place with Stonewall in early 2015 with Stonewall to identify any further development areas for consideration.

## **6. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

6.1 There are financial implications in relation to membership of Stonewall; entry to the WEI is at no additional direct financial cost to the Authority.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Taking part in the WEI demonstrates that the Authority is clearly committed to LGBT equality. Participation leads to improved equality outcomes both in the workplace and in the community ensuring inclusivity and equality for LGBT people.

## **8. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of this report;
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- Stonewall Top 100 Employers 2015, The Workplace Equality WEI.

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