

SUBJECT: PROPOSED EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is proposed that the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) will supersede the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) which has been in place since 2001.
- 1.2 The EFLG has now been subject to consultation, which concluded on 10 September 2008. Consultation returns were made from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the North East Fire & Rescue Services.
- 1.3 Following this period of consultation and review of the returns, the EFLG will be launched at the beginning of 2009 so that authorities can start using it from April 2009 when the new performance framework and Comprehensive Area Assessment come into force.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since 2001 the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) has been in place as a performance and improvement framework to assist local authorities to make real progress in mainstreaming equality issues in service delivery. An equality performance and improvement framework needs to respond to the challenges that local authorities and Fire and Rescue services face today through patterns of migration, changing demographic structure, revised and new legislation and the expectations of the service user.
- 2.2 The original ESLG consisted of five levels:

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| Level 1 | Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy |
| Level 2 | Assessment and community engagement |
| Level 3 | Setting equality objectives and targets |
| Level 4 | Information systems and monitoring against targets |
| Level 5 | Achieving and reviewing outcomes |

Under the EFLG these have now been consolidated into three levels:

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|---------|-----------|
| Level 1 | Emerging |
| Level 2 | Achieving |
| Level 3 | Excellent |

In February 2008 the Authority achieved level three of the ESLG and would therefore work towards the highest level of 'excellent' within the EFLG.

3 ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

- 3.1 An 'excellent' Authority would have to clearly demonstrate that the members and officers have a reputation for championing equality issues and ensure that the equality issues relevant to their communities are embedded in strategic plans, local authority agreements and local delivery plans.
- 3.2 Members, officers, key stakeholders and community members would have to clearly demonstrate that they are confident about equality issues and their relevance for the Authority and their own responsibilities.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Our society is becoming more diverse where the prosperity and cohesion of all communities are affected by the impact of differing age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and religion and belief profiles. In addition socio-economic status is becoming increasingly significant as is migration in many communities who have previously experienced little population change.
- 4.2 The EFLG will provide a coherent framework for local authorities to work with members, staff, communities and local partners, in the public and third sector, to respond to these challenges, to tackle prejudice and improve life chances and opportunities of those who face discrimination and disadvantage.
- 4.3 In addition the EFLG is designed to meet legal equality obligations and will form a clear link to the organisational vision and core values.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Senior management will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary resources and expertise to meet the changes are made available within the organisation. Currently there are no specific financial implications arising.

6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The EFLG is designed to meet legal equality obligations but uses a more inclusive definition of equality drawn from the Equalities Review.

“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish”.

“An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be”.

6.2 Working towards the EFLG 'Excellent' standard will help the Authority to demonstrate its commitment to the Equality and Diversity agenda.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no additional or direct H&S implications with the proposed EFLG.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of this report;
- b) Support the progress toward an 'excellent' rating;
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Strategic Plan 2008-2011