

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 07**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 11 FEBRUARY 2013**

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**SUBJECT: EQUALITY FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

**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 provide an update for Members on preparations for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Equality Framework Peer Challenge, including details of the briefing process for challenge participants.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The FRS Equality Framework is a bespoke framework designed to enable fire and rescue services to measure their performance in relation to equality. It has three levels; 'developing', 'achieving' and 'excellent'.
- 2.2 In December 2009, the Authority migrated to the 'working towards excellence' level of the FRS Equality Framework.
- 2.3 Authorities that had been formally assessed against Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) were awarded the 'Achieving' level. As the Authority had already been formally assessed against Level 3 of the ESLG and self-assessed against Level 4 of this standard, it was deemed as performing above the 'Achieving' level; however a formal assessment would be required to confirm it was working at the 'excellent' level.
- 2.4 The Authority is in the process of preparing for an Equality Peer Challenge at 'excellent', scheduled for 26-28 March 2013.
- 2.5 In August 2012 the Authority undertook a mock challenge; recommendations were taken on board and progressed to further prepare for the formal challenge process.

## **3. PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE**

- 3.1 The Peer Challenge Team was confirmed early in the New Year:
- Gill Elliott, Peer Support Adviser, Local Government Association (LGA)
  - Shaun Frayne, CFO Derbyshire (FRS peer)
  - Garry Collins, Group Manager, East Sussex (FRS peer)
  - Alan Dean, Merseyside (Member peer)
  - Celia Hart, Equality Manager - Wrexham County Borough Council (External peer)

- 3.2 The Authority has now completed the first key stage of the Peer Challenge; to produce a narrative, self-assessment and case studies to present its case for 'excellent'. Key documentation and supportive evidence was sent to the peer challenge team at the beginning of February 2013.
- 3.3 The Equality Peer Challenge Programme is in the process of being confirmed by the LGA and official invites will be sent to challenge participants in early February.
- 3.4 A Communications Strategy has been developed which will be launched in early February to ensure key messages are relayed to employees to raise awareness of the Peer Challenge and provide a refresher in terms of the Authority's approach to equality including an overview of the Authority's Equality Strategy and objectives.
- 3.5 A series of briefings will take place in late February and early March for those who are going to participate in the Peer Challenge process to provide support and guidance in preparation for individual interviews and focus groups. Briefing sessions will be arranged following confirmation of the challenge programme. Each session will cover generic briefing points and will be tailored to suit the audience to ensure that feedback received from the mock exercise is addressed prior to the formal challenge.

#### **4. BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS**

- 4.1 A briefing session for Members has been arranged to take place on 27 February 2013 at 10:00 hours in the Authority Rooms.

#### **5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1 There are minimal financial implications in respect of this report which are contained within existing budgetary headings.

#### **6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Authority's commitment to achieving the FRS Equality Framework at 'excellent' level demonstrates a clear commitment to equality for all. By attaining this standard the Authority can be assured that this will continue to lead to improvements in employment and in the services provided to the communities of Tyne and Wear.

#### **7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- a) Note the content of this report;
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.