

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	18TH MARCH 2010
REPORT NO.	CFO/041/10
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	JAYNE MONKHOUSE, STRATEGIC EQUALITY ADVISOR, MOBILE 07719418311
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JAMES BERRY, DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE & VALUES, EXTN. 4501, MEMBERS OF DIVERSITY ACTION GROUP
SUBJECT:	MF&RS EQUALITY SCHEME 2010 - 2013

**APPENDIX TITLE PROMOTING EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ON
MERSEYSIDE 2010-2013**

ATTACHED – HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members:
 - (a) approve the final draft version of the Authority's new Equality Scheme 2010-13; and
 - (b) agree to submit the draft Scheme to the Performance and Audit Committee on 25th March for discussion as to implementation.
 - (c) agree to seek the support of the representative bodies for the Scheme through a consultation process.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the draft Equality Scheme 2010-13 and submit the draft Scheme to Performance and Audit Committee on 25th March to allow the implications of the scheme to be considered in more depth by that Committee and commence a consultation process.

Executive Summary

Some of the most at-risk and diverse communities of Merseyside are safer as a result of MFRS' actions and our staff better reflect our communities. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is committed to equality and diversity in the way it recruits and employs its staff and in the way it delivers its services. This new Equality Scheme (2010-2013) replaces and builds on our completed Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes. It sets out our core principles and examples of our working practices in a series of case studies provided by staff. An annual Action Plan for delivery will be included in the Service Plan. It meets the new statutory provisions of the new equality legislation currently passing through parliament.

Introduction & Background

3. MF&RS currently has 3 separate Equality Schemes which reflect the current requirements of the public sector duty to promote equality on grounds of race, disability and gender. The Government's proposed Equality Act 2010 is expected to become law in April. It will change the equality and diversity legislation and provide a new framework for the advancement of equality by public bodies – including FRS's. Regardless of the "success" or otherwise of the Equality Bill becoming law, the attached Equality Scheme captures the ambitions of the Authority with regard to equality and diversity.
4. The Equality Act will require all public sector bodies to have due regard for the need to advance equality and eliminate discrimination on eight of the protected characteristics (not marriage and civil partnership). It is expected that it will also charge public bodies with the requirement to reduce socio-economic disadvantage in its strategic decision-making. MF&RS will be required, under the new Bill, to set out how it intends to comply with the new public sector duties.
5. The draft Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013 incorporates the requirements of the new legislation; sets out statements of our commitment to develop equality in respect of the nine protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation); it includes examples of our working practices by means of a series of case studies provided by various staff. An Action Plan is not included as actions will be included separately in the annual Service Plan. The document will be a high quality publication which will include the Diversity DVD and be available on our website as well as in hard copy.
6. Consultation on the new Scheme has taken place with external community groups and internal staff networks. It is proposed that consultation now takes place on the final draft Scheme with the Representative Bodies, and that with the support of the Trade Unions, this period can be limited to six weeks to allow the final draft to be considered for publication at the next Authority meeting on 27th May.

Equality & Diversity Implications

7. The Scheme is designed to ensure that the ambitions of the Authority, with regard to equality and diversity are captured in one scheme and that it meets its potential legal obligations with regard to equality and diversity and has been developed in full consultation with the Diversity Action Group.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

8. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

9. There are no health and safety or environmental implications arising from this report.

Contribution to Achieving the Vision:

“To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community”

10. The Scheme sets out how we will engage with people from all communities on Merseyside, how we will encourage people from under represented groups to apply to work for us and how therefore it will contribute to achieving our vision “to Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community”.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Promoting Equality and Diversity on Merseyside 2010-2013: An intentional inclusion strategy