

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	27TH MAY 2010
REPORT NO.	CFO/091/10
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	JAMES BERRY, TEMPORARY DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE & VALUES
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JAYNE MONKHOUSE, STRATEGIC EQUALITY ADVISOR AND ALL CLT MEMBERS
SUBJECT:	MF&RS EQUALITY SCHEME 2010 - 2013

APPENDIX TITLE: MF&RS EQUALITY SCHEME 2010-2013

HARD COPY (to be provided at the meeting)

Purpose of Report

1. The minority communities of Merseyside are safer today and the Service is a more welcoming employer as a result of the Authority's commitment to Equality and Diversity.
2. Members are asked to approve the recommendations of this report relating to publication of the MF&RS Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013.

Recommendation

3. That Members:
 - (a) Approve the text of the MF&RS Equality Scheme 2010-2013; and
 - (b) Approve the publication of the Scheme.

Executive Summary

All of the diverse communities on Merseyside will become more integrated in the work of MF&RS and benefit from the provision of our services by the publication of the Authority's new Equality Scheme. The Scheme defines the Authority's commitment to advancing equality on Merseyside and supports community cohesion in the area.

Introduction & Background

4. The Authority approved the text of the draft MF&RS Equality Scheme for consultation on 18th March. The Performance and Audit Committee considered the text at its meeting on 25th March. The Representative Bodies agreed to a slightly reduced consultation period in order to permit the Authority to approve the draft for publication at its next Authority meeting (27th May). Consultation has also been undertaken internally through the Diversity Action Group and externally with representatives of community groups on Merseyside. All consultees have welcomed the Scheme and hope that a number of minor amendments will be acceptable to the Authority.
5. As a result of the consultation a number of changes proposed to the original draft document; in particular:
 - (a) Reference has been included in the section concerning pregnancy and maternity, to the Authority providing facilities for women who are breastfeeding when they return to work from maternity leave;
 - (b) Reference has been removed from the section concerning religion and belief, to the work done by the Threat Response Group in respect of one community in order to preserve a balanced approach;
 - (c) Reference to the Authority's approach to domestic violence in the section on gender, has been expanded to explain how victims of domestic violence are often targeted at work;
 - (d) Reference to the Authority's involvement in the first Liverpool Pride Parade later this year has been included in the section concerning sexual orientation; and
 - (e) Reference to the gender pay gap has been expanded to explain that the Authority implements all national pay agreements on a non-gender basis and that differences in pay can result from gender differences in senior ranks/grades and length of service.
6. The final draft document reflects the provisions of the new Equality Act 2010 and is a model of best practice in this area.
7. It is proposed that the final draft is published with pictures that showcase the Authority's achievements and activities in respect of equality and diversity.

Equality & Diversity Implications

8. The document supports all the Authority's actions in respect of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between different communities on Merseyside.
9. Publication of an Equality Scheme (either as a separate document or as part of a Service Plan) is a statutory requirement under the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, due to be implemented in 2011. Publication of an organisation's gender pay gap is a recommendation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the facility to require public bodies to publish their gender pay gap is included in the Equality Act 2010.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

10. The cost of publishing the Scheme has been included in this year's Diversity budget.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

11. None arising from this report.

Contribution to Achieving the Vision:

"To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community"

12. The Scheme sets out the Authority's commitment to advancing equality on Merseyside in all that we do to make Merseyside safer, stronger and healthier.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

A mock-up of the final document will be available in the Member's room before the meeting and further copies available at the meeting