



AGENDA ITEM: 12

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19 September 2016

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT (REPORTING PERIOD 2015-2016)

Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To seek Members' approval for the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report (Reporting Period 2015-2016) in response to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Background

- 2 The Equality Act 2010 came into effect in October 2010. The Act replaced separate equality duties relating to race, gender and disability discrimination contained in the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act extends coverage of the duty to the other protected characteristics of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.
- 3 The Act places a General Duty on listed public bodies which requires them, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to:
 - eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
 - advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 4 In April 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government exercised its powers to introduce Specific Duties, designed to aid transparency and enable a public authority in Wales to meet the General Duty. These are set out within the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- 5 The Specific Duty requires public authorities in Wales to produce and publish an Annual Report detailing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan objectives no later than 31st March each year. The information should cover the complete financial year finishing 12 months prior to the reporting deadline.
- 6 The update must include:
 - engagement and involvement provisions for protected characteristic groups;
 - ensuring published material is accessible;
 - assessing the impact of relevant policies and practices;
 - training and collation of employment information;
 - promoting knowledge and understanding of the Act amongst employees;
 - addressing unfair pay differences;
 - reviewing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and associated equality objectives;
 - procurement practice provisions.
- 7 Compliance with the legislation is regulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The role of the EHRC under the law is to protect, enforce and promote equality. This role is discharged through the provision of guidance, regulation and enforcement activity.

Information

- 8 This fourth Annual Report for the reporting year 2015-2016 aims to meet Regulation 16 of the Wales Specific Duties and has been produced in line with the Welsh Government annual reporting guidance template. To establish consistency the report is laid out according to the Wales Specific Duties and focuses primarily on data linked to our activity during the set timeframe.

- 9 Specified employment information including pay is presented along with equality data at recruitment. The existing Management Information System (MIS) is reaching the end of its life. A project to identify a replacement MIS has been initiated with a part time Implementation Manager employed in November 2015. A new MIS will assist with data collection, enhancing accuracy, access to timely and meaningful information, which will assist with decision-making. Such a system will improve the quality of the information available when conducting equality impact assessments.
- 10 During 2015, the Service implemented a six month pilot to trial three different methods of collecting equalities data at operational incidents. The information collected is an extension of the data already being collected during the home safety check and ensures that the Service is in a position to analyse incident information and determine if there are members of the community, that fell under the protected characteristics, that may be at greater risk of being involved in an incident whether a fire or road traffic collision. This will allow for the development of specific initiatives to reduce any risk.
- 11 The Authority has a statutory duty to engage with **all** members of the community both in its own activities, and in collaboration with other public bodies and the Third Sector. Work has been undertaken by the Authority with individuals and groups that share the following specific protected characteristics:
- **Age**
 - **Disability**
 - **Women and people with differing ethnic backgrounds**
 - **Religion**
 - **LGBT**
 - **Sex**
 - **Poverty**
 - **Victims of Modern Slavery**
 - **Victims of Hate Crime**
 - **Homeless People.**

- 12 Progress towards achieving each of our equality objectives is outlined in the report along with statements of the effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information.
- 13 The attached annual report is intended for multiple audiences and provides an opportunity for transparency for our partners and the public.

Recommendations

- 14 Members are asked to:
 - (i) note the content of the report;
 - (ii) approve the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2015-2016 for publication on the Service's website.