



AGENDA ITEM: 9

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18th March 2013

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report (Reporting Period 2011-2012)

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 2011-2012) 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 a Strategic Equality Plan detailing equality objectives aligned to the regulations, published no later than 1st April 2012.
- 6 The Regulations 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 An Annual Report is also required, detailing information for a complete financial year finishing twelve months before the reporting deadline of 31st March each year.
- 8 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

- 9 Our Strategic Equality Plan sets out our on-going commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for the residents, elected members, staff members and all visitors to the North Wales area.

- 10 This is the first annual report which aims to meet Regulation 16 of the Wales Specific Duties and has been produced in line with the Welsh Local Government Association annual reporting guidance template.
- 11 The template was produced in response to the unusual nature of the first year of annual reporting, establishing the focus of the report on the period from 1st April 2011 through to 31st October 2012 and specifying what must be included.
- 12 Consequently the attached annual report includes:
 - the steps the Authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information
 - how the Authority has used the information in meeting the three aims of the general duty
 - reasons for not collecting relevant information
 - a statement of the effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information
 - specified employment information, including information on training and pay.
- 13 Whilst not a requirement, it was considered valuable to include the Authority's equality objectives and information relating to progress towards achieving them.
- 14 The attached Annual Report is intended for multiple audiences and provides an opportunity for transparency for our partners and the public.

Recommendations

- 15 Members are asked to:
 - (i) note the contents of the report;
 - (ii) approve the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2011-2012 for publication on the Service's website.