



## **AGENDA ITEM: 11**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**21 March 2016**

#### **STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 (STATUTORY DUTIES) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2011**

**Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To seek Member approval for the second Strategic Equality Plan 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contained in the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, repealed by the 2010 Act. The Equality Act extended 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:
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
  - foster 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 Compliance with the legislation will be regulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The role of the EHRC under the new law is to protect, enforce and promote equality. This role will be discharged through the provision of guidance, regulation and enforcement activity.

## **Information**

- 6 The Specific Duty requires public authorities in Wales to produce a strategic equality plan detailing equality objectives aligned to the regulations.
- 7 The regulations include requirements for:
  - the engagement and involvement provisions for protected characteristic groups;
  - ensuring published material is accessible;
  - assessing the impact of relevant policies and practices;
  - training and the 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.
- 8 The plan outlines the key equality objectives identified by our stakeholders and has been designed to build on the achievements of our previous Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016.
- 9 The content of the equality objectives has also been aligned to the:
  - requirements of the General Public Sector Equality Duty, and the Specific Regulations 2011 (Wales);
  - North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's combined improvement and risk reduction objectives.

- 10 The plan will be publicised and promoted both internally and externally to raise awareness of the work we are doing. The legislation requires that the plan is reviewed no later than four years after publication, although the Authority may review, revise or remake any objective at any time. Activity will be monitored to assess the impact on the public and on employees of the actions the Service takes. Progress will be reported on annually to the Authority.
- 11 The importance of the plan is that it encourages everyone to think about the different needs of North Wales communities. In delivering services to a diverse population everyone has different needs. The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Authority's ongoing commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for the residents, staff members and all visitors to the North Wales area.

## **Recommendations**

- 12 That Members:
  - (i) note the content of the report;
  - (ii) approve the Strategic Equality Plan for publication.