

HUMBERSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY – COMBINED EQUALITIES SCHEME 2009-12

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to the Authority's Combined Equalities Scheme 2009-12 which is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND

2. Humberside Police Authority currently has three separate equality schemes and associated action plans. These schemes have been published in accordance with statutory requirements in connection with disability, gender and race. This Combined Equalities Scheme (CES) brings these three schemes together and also pre-empts any future legislation (for example the Equalities Bill) by encompassing other strands of diversity, namely sexual orientation, age and religion / belief.
3. This Scheme follows the Association of Police Authorities (APA) template which the APA agreed with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). This approach has been endorsed by the EHRC and should therefore ensure that there are no gaps in relation to compliance with this Combined Equalities Scheme.
4. The recent legislative changes such as the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000; the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 has shifted the emphasis away from mere compliance with discrimination laws and introduced positive duties to promote equality and good race relations. These positive duties were further reinforced by the Police and Justice Act 2006 which requires all police authorities '*..to promote equality and diversity within the police force maintained for its area and within the authority*'.
5. These legislative changes have led to a much greater emphasis being placed upon the 'customer' and on individual and diverse needs, as well as ensuring that organisations are recognised as employers of choice – meaning that equalities issues are now fundamental to all policy development, workforce management and service delivery.
6. Equality and respect for diversity is essential in policing and Humberside Police Authority has a dual responsibility – to promote equality and diversity within the authority and externally but also to ensure that the Force is also promoting equality and diversity. This is important given the potential impact it has on the trust and confidence of local communities which the police needs in order to police by consent, effectively keep the peace and prevent and detect crime.

OPTIONS / RISK

7. The Combined Equality Scheme 2009-12 amalgamates key messages from our existing disparate schemes, reduces duplication and makes the implementation of the actions more manageable and co-ordinated. The risk clearly is that if we don't have a scheme in place we will not be compliant with the relevant equalities legislation. The theory behind the use of a combined approach is that the equalities objectives and actions of the authority will be captured all in one place, therefore making the process less confusing for the public. This attached scheme sets out how the police authority will meet its general and specific duties; however it is not sufficient to have a legally compliant scheme if it doesn't act as a template for organisational action and improvement.
8. The Action Plan to accompany this Combined Equalities Scheme is currently being developed. However this needs to be considered in conjunction with the potential service level agreement which the Authority is trying to secure with an external company that will help drive forward the Authority's business in this area, particularly in relation to the Authority's consultation and engagement with diverse communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no potential additional financial implications directly associated with the approval of this report. However current capacity within the Authority to deliver the aspirations of this CES is an issue which is why the Authority are currently looking to work in partnership with an external specialist organisation and to work with the Force on implementation wherever possible.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. This Combined Equalities Scheme has utilised the template provided by the APA after endorsement regarding compliance from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. As we have followed this template non-compliance with the myriad of equalities legislation is minimised. However given the nature of the Authority's duty we do need to 'raise our game' in terms of translating the words on paper into tangible positive outcomes and real gains for equality.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11. These are covered in the main body of the report and Appendix 1.

CHILDREN'S ACT IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no implications associated with this report in connection with the Children's Act.

CONCLUSIONS

13. This report and Appendix 1 demonstrates the Police Authority's commitment to meeting its statutory and moral duties to actively promote equality and diversity.

There is still work to do in connection with the development of the Action Plan and associated appendices as well as the wider work which the authority is undertaking to further our 'reach' and understanding of the many diverse groups within the Humberside policing area. As such, this scheme should be considered alongside the Authority's new Community Engagement Strategy and proposals recently received by this Committee to improve the Authority's consultation processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. On the basis of the above Members are asked to:

- (i) Approve the Combined Equalities Scheme (CES) set out at Appendix 1. Members will note there is still minor drafting to be made to the CES but this will not materially affect the spirit of the document.
- (ii) Agree that the development of the Action Plan and additional appendices be delegated to the Chief Executive and this Committee receive regular updates on the implementation of the Action Plan.
- (iii) Agree that this CES is considered by the Force Independent Advisory Group (FIAG) and shared with other stakeholders before finalisation and that any subsequent amendments as a result are delegated to the Chief Executive.
- (iv) Request an update from the Force on its own Combined Equalities Scheme at the next meeting of this Committee.

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Background Papers: APA Guidance 'A combined equalities scheme framework for police authorities' – complying with the disability, gender and race equality duties.