

**MINUTES OF EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS ADVISORY GROUP
MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2006 AT 10:00 HRS
AT BEXHILL FIRE STATION.**

PRESENT:	<p>Gary Walsh Dick Ashley Matt Dale Mick Feather Gils Goncalves Chris Greenway Jim Mahoney Derek Masson Ann Newton Angela Parker Andy Reynolds Phil Scott Anne Bryen Sarah Playforth</p>	<p>Chair Director of Service Support Fire Brigades Union Equal Opportunities Training & Development Co-ordinator Diversity, Equalities & Fairness Officer Head of Personnel Services Service Support Officer Head of Business Assurance UNISON Corporate Services Directorate Director of Community Protection Member of Fire Authority Clerk East Sussex Disability Association</p>
APOLOGIES:	Dave Dowling	Director of Risk Management
		ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY:
45/06	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
	Taken and recorded.	
46/06	MINUTES	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6 August 2006 were approved as a correct record, subject to minute no. 35/06 being amended to read:</p> <p>‘Matt Dale was concerned whether ESFRS had a Discipline & Grievance Policy. Chris Greenway explained that the version based on the Grey Book was being drafted, as the information in the Grey Book for Disciplinary and Grievance was not a procedure in itself. This was now going through the consultation stage and a further meeting was planned with Steve Huggins, following which Dick Ashley would meet with Chris Greenway to discuss further and bring appropriate policies to FBU consultation meetings.’</p>	
	PRESENTATIONS	
47/06	The draft ESFRS Disability Equality Scheme	
	<p>The Group welcomed Sarah Playforth, representing the East Sussex Disability Association, to the meeting.</p> <p>Sarah reminded the Group that all public authorities were required to have published a Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2006. All employers were now covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and each case brought under the Act had to be treated on its merits. The disability equality duty located any problems associated with a disability, not with the individual but with the barriers within an organisation, and the main purpose of the duty was to remove those barriers. Disabled people could bring a class action if public authorities were not removing the barriers and not complying with the DDA. The publication of a disability equality scheme was one aspect of meeting the requirements of the DDA.</p>	

“You promote what you permit”

	<p>Copies of a report from the East Sussex Disability Association on the comments made by disabled people on the ESFRS draft Disability Equality Scheme were circulated. (Copy filed).</p> <p>The report from ESDA included a combination of general points and comments and suggested amendments, made by disabled individuals.</p> <p>Sarah presented ESDA's report which covered the following:- Format, style and language; General comments on content; Perceived Omissions; Employment Issues; Positive Images; Joint Foreword; Defining Disability; Duty to Promote Disability; General Duty; Specific Duty; Social/medical Models; The community; Involving Employees; Involving Users; Impact Assessment; Meaning of Disability; and the Action Plan.</p> <p>Key points from the discussion included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An executive summary and action plan should be provided for the Disability Equality Scheme. - It would be useful to include positive images of disabled people at work in ESFRS. - It should be made apparent that documents can be made available in alternative formats, and it would be good practice to make reference to this fact at the beginning of all documents. - Documentation should be provided in various formats on an individual basis as requested, rather than a broad brush approach. The use of point 12 font was likely to mean that there would be fewer requests for large print documents. There needed to be a mechanism in place for transcribing documents into other formats when requested. Black print on white paper was a good standard, but it was noted that other colours may be requested from time to time. - The use of the term 'champion' should be avoided, as it could be construed as patronising. A Disability Officer should preferably be independent of health, medical or personnel staff. - Awareness training could be delivered by anyone, but experience had shown that value was added if it was delivered by a disabled person, (provided they were a skilled trainer), as it was beneficial to see a disabled person in a position of power and control. - It would be preferable to use the social model of disability throughout the document, (rather than the medical model of disability). <p>The Chairman and the Group thanked Sarah for her presentation and the valuable work done by ESDA in commenting on the draft ESFRS Disability Equality Scheme.</p> <p>Agreed that Gils Goncalves would consider further the comments for inclusion in the scheme.</p>	<p>Gils Goncalves/ Gary Walsh</p>

48/06	Gender Equality Duty	
	Gils Goncalves informed the Group that the Gender Equality Duty, (applicable to public services), had to be implemented by April 2007. This was the first piece of legislation in relation to gender equality to be brought forward since 1975. A Code of Practice from the Equal Opportunities Commission was awaited. The Gender Equality Scheme should be in place by 30 April 2007 alongside an Action Plan, and the scheme should be reviewed and published every three years. Information was currently being gathered to draft a Gender Equality Duty, and consideration was being given to the cost implications of a scheme and how policy and legislation may affect both genders.	Mick Feather
49/06	ACTION POINT REPORTS	
	30/06 and 4/06(iii) General Policy Monitoring	
	Noted that the Fire Authority would be considering the Disability Equality Scheme on 11 December 2006. The scheme would be published on 4 December 2006, acknowledging that there would be further work needed to the scheme following a review of the comments received from the East Sussex Disability Association and other consultees. Noted that Chris Greenway, Dick Ashley and Gary Walsh would discuss how to proceed following Gils Goncalves departure.	Chris Greenway Dick Ashley Gary Walsh
	27/06 Browsaloud	
	Noted that the relevant information had been circulated. Liz Foster would include this on the Best Value Performance Plan and Annual Plan.	Liz Foster
	30/06 and 6/06 Religion Brochure	
	See minute no. 52/06 below.	
	30/06 and 20/06 Age Discrimination Document for Review	
	Chris Greenway reported that she had received no adverse comments since this had been published for consultation. The consultation period would end on 30 November 2006, after which date a Manual Note would be issued.	Chris Greenway
	31/06 (i) Corporate Update	
	(i) Gary Walsh reported that Steve Brown had replaced Steve Butcher as the TGWU nominated representative on EFAG. (ii) (iii) Dick Ashley said that staff were asking for the results of the staff survey to be made known. It was agreed that a report on the staff survey results would be posted on the intranet and included in the service brief, stating that an Action Plan would be drawn up. Gils pointed out that the Disability Equality Strategy and the Gender Equality Strategy would address some of the issues raised in the staff survey. Agreed that the drawing up of the Action Plan be considered at the next meeting of EFAG.	Clerk Dick Ashley Gary Walsh/ Clerk

	33/06 and 21/06 Equality Impact Assessment Training	
	<p>Mick Feather reported that staff would be trained in two sessions on 22 November 2006. These training sessions were aimed at people who were drafting policy documents. The Impact Assessments were a screening process and any issues identified from that process should be considered by EFAG where further work was needed.</p> <p>Noted that it would be appropriate for representative bodies to nominate representatives for Equality Impact Assessment training.</p> <p>Agreed that Dick Ashley and Mick Feather assess who required EIA training, who would be specialist task employees and representative bodies, and specifically targeted at individuals for relevancy.</p> <p>Noted that it would not be possible to put in hyperlinks in Manuals to EIAs because of the current format of the Manuals. Gils suggested that ICT be asked to include templates and key links to where EIAs are.</p> <p>Agreed that Derek Masson investigate further and report back to the next meeting of EFAG.</p>	<p>Dick Ashley/ Mick Feather</p> <p>Derek Masson</p>
	34/06 Religious Guide and Religious/Cultural Calendar	
	See minute no. 52/06 below.	
	35/06 Discipline and Grievance Policy	
	Chris Greenway reported that she had met with Steve Huggins on 11 November 2006 and he would be comparing her documents and would respond to her in due course. When his comments were received, Chris would amend as appropriate and post on the intranet.	Chris Greenway
	39/06 LGBT Recruitment Fair - Brighton	
	Gary Walsh reported that this had been considered further at the Members' Seminar. Phil Scott said that Members' view was that there would be no compulsion on officers to attend the Pride event, but that they may do so if they so wished. It was noted that the Chief Constable of the Sussex Police had attended.	
	41/06 Attendance at Courses on Rota Days	
	Gary Walsh reported that work was in hand regarding issues surrounding the attendance of staff on rota days, including the costs of childcare, and that he would report to the next meeting of EFAG.	Gary Walsh
50/06	STANDING AGENDA ITEMS	
50/06(i)	Corporate Update	
	<p>(i) Equality and Diversity Award Scheme and the launch of the 'Aspire' Leadership Model</p> <p>Gary Walsh reported that Angela Smith, the Fire Minister, had announced both an Equality and Diversity Award Scheme and the launch of the Aspire Leadership Model, both which were aimed at improving equality and diversity within the Fire and Rescue Service. The award scheme would recognise both the fire and rescue service and the individuals who had made the greatest progress on equality and diversity. The scheme was jointly sponsored by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Chief Fire Officers' Association and the Local Government Association. The first awards would be made at the Fire Conference in May 2007.</p>	

	<p>The 'Aspire' Leadership Programme was developed by the Centre for Leadership and drew on the training developed by individual fire and rescue services. The Centre for Leadership would be producing a toolkit and guides to leadership assessment specifically tailored for the fire and rescue service.</p> <p>(ii) CFOA Circular 2006 1029 – The Duty to Promote Disability Gary Walsh reported that this circular had been issued on 8 November 2006. Chief Officers had received a set of materials from the Learning and Skills Network funded by the Learning and Skills Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council. These materials provided practical advice, tools and examples drawn from practice, and offered key messages about implementing the new duty.</p> <p>(ii) Recruitment Campaign Chris Greenway reported that applications had been received from 744 males and 63 females for firefighting recruitment. The higher than usual response from females had demonstrated that the positive action had been beneficial. A total of 2,500 applications had been sent out. The National Assessment Unit had been launched by DCLG during the previous week, at which 40 of the 46 fire and rescue services had been represented. With effect from 20 November 2006, personnel were being trained to sift the applications received and it was anticipated that this would take until Christmas. DCLG would be monitoring the process. The first question to be satisfied in the application forms related to equality and applicants who failed this point would not be considered further. Dick Ashley said that recruits would be trained in-house at the Training Centre at Maresfield from September 2007 and this would be a non-residential course in order to be more family friendly. Agreed that Chris Greenway would liaise with Dave Dowling to issue a press release, (providing information on how the applications would be dealt with), through Priory Partnerships. Agreed that Gary Walsh would arrange for details to be put on the internet and recruitment line informing applicants that no further information about their applications would be available until they hear further from Personnel staff. Also agreed that a letter be sent to a sample of potential applicants who did not return a completed application form enquiring why they did not proceed to ascertain what barriers existed to them applying. Chris Greenway agreed to e-mail figures about applicants' returns to any of the Group who requested them.</p>	<p>Chris Greenway/ Dave Dowling</p> <p>Gary Walsh/ Chris Greenway</p> <p>Chris Greenway</p> <p>Chris Greenway</p>
50/06(ii)	Harassment and Bullying Monitoring	
	<p>Noted that there were six cases on-going (four remaining from the last meeting). Also noted that a Harassment Co-ordinator post was still to be filled. Chris Greenway agreed to e-mail Directors asking for figures (not names) for the end of year compilation for the return to DCLG.</p>	Chris Greenway

50/06(iii)	General Policy Monitoring	
	Nothing to report.	
	MAIN AGENDA ITEMS	
51/06	Commission for Equality & Human Rights and Single Equality Duty	
	<p>Gary Walsh circulated a briefing note that outlined the provisions of The Equality Bill 2006.</p> <p>The Equality Bill would establish a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) replacing the three existing equality bodies – the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The new body will aim to prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, religion and beliefs and sexual orientation. The Bill also introduced a 'gender duty' on public authorities requiring them to promote equality of opportunity between men and women, and sought to outlaw discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of religion or belief.</p> <p>The briefing note source was: http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/cehr/vision.htm</p> <p>Noted that there were no current plans to bring human rights issues into the work of this new Commission.</p> <p>Agreed that consideration should be given to having a single equalities policy for ESFRS and that a report be brought to the next meeting of the EFAG to consider the way forward.</p>	Mick Feather
52/06	Positive Action	
	<p>Mick Feather informed the Group that he had received some negative comments relating to positive action, inasmuch as some staff had misunderstood the difference between positive action and positive discrimination, and felt that some appointments were being made through positive discrimination.</p> <p>Chris Greenway said that any wording used in the positive action events/statements had come from the Equal Opportunities Commission. It was noted that the difference between positive action and positive discrimination should continue to be promulgated and raised at training sessions.</p>	All to action
53/06	Flexible Working Hours Policy	
	<p>Mick Feather requested clarification about an issue in the flexitime scheme in relation to support staff who were required, on occasions, to travel to an alternative location for work or training courses. Copies of the Flexible Working Hours General Conditions were circulated.</p> <p>Paragraph 12 was at issue: 12. ABSENCE FROM OFFICE ON OFFICIAL BUSIENSS FOR A WHOLE DAY OR HALF DAY 12.1 The time worked including travelling time, in excess of normal travel to work time, should be shown on the record sheet'.</p>	

	<p>Chris Greenway clarified that, to meet the requirements of the working time directive, staff had to record their travelling time in line with the rules set out in the ESFRS flexible working hours policy; however, this time was not to be counted as working hours in credit. Support staff were able to claim the cost of travelling to an alternative location to their usual place of work, but not any additional time taken merely because the workplace was a different location. This was laid down in the national scheme and could not be altered for ESFRS.</p> <p>Agreed that Chris Greenway and Gary Walsh should consider further if there was any need to clarify the wording of paragraph 12.1</p>	Chris Greenway/ Gary Walsh
54/06	Religious Guide/ Religious Wallchart and Calendar/ Religious Guide Launch Details	
	Mick Feather reported that the wall chart calendars had been sent to the printers and a promotion for the posters had been printed on the reverse. The wall chart would be distributed amongst the fire stations and could be laminated. A launch would be held on 17 November jointly with West Sussex FRS.	
55/06	HAN Advisers - Progress	
	<p>Mick Feather reported that there was currently no HAN co-ordinator. Anyone interested should approach Chris Greenway in the first instance. The closing date was 30 November and there had been 9 expressions of interest so far. Applicants to be considered for this post would need to be able to treat information confidentially and demonstrate a sensible approach to guiding people. Further discussions on the appointment of advisers would take place between Jim Mahoney, Chris Greenway, Dick Ashley and Gary Walsh. It was hoped that by the next EFAG meeting, the Co-ordinator and the Advisers would be in post.</p> <p>Noted that the training costs had not been budgeted for and was an issue for the Workforce Development Group. Noted that the current poster advertising the harassment advisers was out of date until the new advisers had been appointed.</p>	
56/06	Meeting Room Facilities at Fire Stations	
	Mick Feather asked that consideration be given to formalising the use of community facilities at fire stations where accommodation was let. Derek Masson informed the Group that he was working with Daryll Luxford and Colin Thompson on a framework for letting accommodation.	Derek Masson
57/06	Equality and Fairness Representatives' Reports	
	(a) FBU	
	<p>(i) <u>Temporary Promotions and Acting Up</u></p> <p>Matt Dale asked if there was a list of uniformed staff who would be taken in order for temporary promotion from Station Manager to Group Manager. Chris Greenway confirmed that a list had existed but that this had been exhausted and further consideration was to be given as to how temporary promotions should be dealt with. Gary Walsh advised that staff had been interviewed for two temporary Group Manager posts, and that they had not been taken from the list. Applicants had to have completed the vector course for temporary promotion at this level, and/or undertaken the pre-crew command course and the team leaders course. A qualified fire fighter could act up on shift if the manager felt that the individual had the necessary qualities and experience.</p>	

	<p>Jim Mahoney reported that the Temporary Promotion and Acting Up Policy was currently under review.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Catering</u> Matt Dale said that the whole time staff received a meal allowance, but the retained firefighters did not if they were called out. Gary Walsh pointed out that the whole time staff could go back to a facility, whereas the retained staff went home. Agreed that Gary would check the policy and that this should be discussed further at the FBU consultation meeting. Matt Dale raised the issue of cooks on day crewed stations. Gary Walsh said that it had been agreed previously to improve kitchens but that there would be no cooks. Changes had been introduced in this year. Agreed that this be considered at the FBU consultation meeting.</p> <p>(iii) <u>ADC Process</u> Matt Dale said that the retained staff received pay for attending the ADC process whereas whole time staff did not. Jim Mahoney said that the ADC process was voluntary and therefore should not attract payment. Chris Greenway agreed to look into this further.</p>	<p>Jim Mahoney</p> <p>Gary Walsh</p> <p>Matt Dale</p> <p>Chris Greenway</p>
	(b) UNISON	
	Nothing to report	
	(c) and (d) TGWU and FOA	
	Nothing to report.	
	(e) Directorate Representatives	
	Nothing to report.	
	(f) Others	
	Nothing to report.	
58/06	URGENT ITEMS	
	There were none.	
59/06	DATES AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS	
	Thursdays:- 22 February, 24 May, 30 August and 15 November 2007 at Bexhill Community Fire Station, commencing at 10.00 hours.	ALL to note
60/06	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	There was none.	
61/06	EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	
	There were no items in relation to which the Panel resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting.	
	The meeting ended at 11.55 hours	
Signed		Chair
Dated this	day of	2006

EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS ADVISORY GROUP ACTIONS		
18/05	Childcare vouchers	
	Monitoring report to EFAG in March 2007.	Chris Greenway
30/06 4/06(iii) 47/06	General Policy Monitoring and Disability Equality Scheme	
	Comments from the East Sussex Disability Association on the draft Disability Equality Scheme to be considered for inclusion in the Scheme. Consideration to be given to progressing following the departure of Gils Goncalves.	Gil Goncalves/ Gary Walsh Chris Greenway/ Dick Ashley/ Gary Walsh
48/06	Gender Equality Scheme	
	Further information to be gathered on the Gender Equality Duty and consideration of cost implications and how policy and legislation may affect both genders.	Mick Feather
27/06	Browsaloud	
	Relevant information to be included on the Best Value Performance Plan and the Annual Plan.	Liz Foster
30/06 and 20/06	Age Discrimination Document for Review	
	Manual Note to be issued after consultation period ends on 30 November 2006.	Chris Greenway
31/06(i)	Corporate Update	
	(i) Steve Brown has replaced Steve Butcher on EFAG (ii) Report on staff survey to be posted on intranet and included in service brief, stating that Action Plan would be drawn up. (iii) Drafting an Action Plan be considered at the next meeting of EFAG discuss.	Clerk Dick Ashley Dick Ashley/ Gary Walsh
33/06	Equality Impact Assessment Training	
	(i) Dick Ashley and Mick Feather to assess who required EIA training (ii) Further consideration be given to ICT including templates and key links to where EIAs are.	Dick Ashley/ Mick Feather Derek Masson
35/06	Discipline & Grievance Policy	
	Chris Greenway to amend as necessary following comments from Steve Huggins, and arrange for posting on the intranet.	Chris Greenway
41/06	Attendance at Courses on Rota Days	
	Gary Walsh to report to next EFAG meeting.	Gary Walsh

50/06 (i)	Recruitment Campaign (i) Press release to be issued through Priory Partnership relating to how the applications would be dealt with. (ii) Details to be posted on the internet and recruitment line informing applicants that no further information about their applications would be available until they heard further from personnel. (iii) Letter to be sent to a sample of potential applicants who had not returned a completed application form to ascertain why they had not proceeded. (iv) Chris Greenway to e-mail figures about applicants returns to any of the EFAG who requested them.	Chris Greenway/ Dave Dowling Gary Walsh/ Chris Greenway Chris Greenway Chris Greenway
50/06 (ii)	Harassment and Bullying Monitoring Chris Greenway to e-mail Directors asking for figures for return to DCLG	Chris Greenway
51/06	Commission for Equality & Human Rights and a Single Equality Duty Consideration to be given to having a single equalities policy for ESFRS – report to next EFAG meeting	Mick Feather
52/06	Positive Action The difference between positive action and positive discrimination continue to be promulgated and raised at training sessions.	All to action
53/06	Flexible Working Hours Policy Chris Greenway and Gary Walsh to consider if there is any need to clarify the wording of paragraph 12.1 of the policy.	Chris Greenway/ Gary Walsh
56/06	Meeting Room Facilities at Fire Stations Framework being prepared for letting accommodation.	Derek Masson
57/06(i)	Temporary Promotions and Acting Up Policy being reviewed.	Jim Mahoney
57/06 (ii)	Catering Gary Walsh to check policy on meal allowances for retained staff, and issue be considered further at FBU consultation meeting. The employment of cooks be considered at the next FBU Consultation meeting	Gary Walsh Matt Dale
57/06 (iii)	ADC Process The policy on payments for attendances at ADC process to be investigated by Chris Greenway.	Chris Greenway