Subject: Faith Equality Scheme

Report Number: 17

Report to: Business Management and Appointments Committee

Date: 13th October 2004

Report of: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

1. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1.1 Notes the Faith Equality Scheme; and

1.2 Adopts the Faith Equality Scheme in respect of the functions, in particular those outlined in paragraph 3.3, for which the Assembly are responsible.

2. Background

2.1 This report outlines the reasons for producing a Faith Equality Scheme for the GLA.

2.2 The purpose of the Faith Equality Scheme is to ensure the Authority has all the measures and provisions in place to meet the requirements of the EU Directive and fulfil the Business Plan objective of producing an equality scheme to meet the needs of faith groups. The scheme is built upon the template developed for the Race Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme.

2.3 In November 2000 Directive 200/78/EC was adopted establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation without discrimination “on the grounds of religion or belief, age and sexual orientation [“the employment directive”]. The Directive prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion or belief and requires the GLA to implement provisions for dealing with religious discrimination in the workplace. The Directive covers employment and occupation only and includes the following areas:

- Conditions for access for employment, including selection criteria and recruitment conditions, at all levels, including promotion;
- Access to all types and all levels of training, including practical work experience;
- Employment and working conditions, including dismissals and pay;
- Membership of, and involvement in employers’ or workers’ organisations or professional bodies [for example, BMA or Law Society].
2.4 The Directive also includes those who do not belong to any particular religious group. Thus,
protection is given to those who belong to a defined, traditional, recognised and established
religion, those who do not believe or those who hold unconventional beliefs that are not subscribed
to by others.

2.5 Leading London’s equality agenda is one of the Mayor’s key aims and he has a statutory duty to
promote equality of opportunity (GLA Act s404). In his manifesto the Mayor states: “the challenge
for the Mayor and Assembly is to embrace London’s diversity as a source of strength and opportunity
for London and to address the issues of race and diversity in the mainstream of the Mayor’s
policies”.

2.6 The GLA made a commitment in its Equalities Strategy 2002/4 that it will “ensure staff have the
right to celebrate and honour faith days through use of flexible work and annual leave, if the days
are not statutory holidays”, for example, Eid-Ul-Fitr (Muslims) and Divali (Hindus).

2.7 Furthermore, as a result of the Best Value “Equalities for All” Review the GLA agreed to “carry out
targeted work on all equality target groups, including faith groups”. GLA Operational Team Equality
Plan 2002/3 clearly states that the GLA will develop and improve GLA actions and systems to
address religious groups, including requirements for a GLA Faith Equality Scheme. Adopting this
approach would demonstrate the Mayor’s commitment to challenging religious discrimination, in all
its forms, throughout the organisation and would support the Equalities Vision adopted by the
Authority.

2.8 The draft Faith Equality Scheme was presented to MMB in November 2003 and went out for
consultation to Faith Leaders and key faith groups and the final version (Appendix 1) went to MMB
in June 04. The findings from the faith monitoring staff survey also informed the content of the
scheme

3. Issues for Consideration

3.1 The Faith Equality Scheme and action plan which accompanies this report was developed as a direct
response to the Employment Framework Directive and sets out the Mayor’s strategy for dealing with
faith equality and for engaging more effectively with faith groups. The Scheme is a demonstration
of exemplary practice and brings together in one document all the GLA’s arrangements and actions
to achieve faith equality and to ensure a robust response across employment and service delivery.

3.2 An analysis of the results from the faith monitoring staff survey has informed the faith equality
scheme. In total, 74 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 11.9%. Overall, 39 or
52.7% of respondents represented those with faith whilst 35 or 47.3% or the respondents indicated
that they belong to no faith. The largest faith group was Christian with a breakdown as follows:
Church of England -33%; Catholic - 30%; Protestant - 15%; Evangelical - 7.5%; Salvation Army -
3.75%. Only 4% of the respondents represented Muslim or Jewish faiths (3 respondents for each).
The questionnaire asked for staff views on whether the GLA adequately and appropriately catered
for different faith and religious needs and there were no adverse or negative responses.

3.3 Specific actions highlighted in the Faith Equality Scheme that relate to the Assembly’s functions are
that faith monitoring to be part of the six monthly staff monitoring process and that the monitoring
of job applicants should include a faith category.

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1 Mayors manifesto 2000 and repeated the Business Plan 2003/4
2 Best Value “Equalities for All” Review 2002
3.4 In addition to the staff survey, consultation was carried out in a number of ways including through the regular Mayor’s meeting with the faith leaders from the major faith denominations across London; two local authorities (Leicester and Manchester) who are known for their good practice and a selection of key organizations who have undertaken faith equality initiatives were asked for comments and internally through Unison and staff groups. Generally the feedback on the scheme was positive particularly the fact that the GLA were going beyond the EC requirements and attempting to demonstrate how to be an exemplary equalities organization. It resulted in several changes to the tone of the document so that it celebrates the positive approach undertaken by the GLA and affirms its commitment to enable members of faith groups to observe their faith requirements in the workplace, where appropriate, and without discrimination. At the same time it recognises the need to treat staff who hold non-conventional beliefs in the same way.

4. **Strategy Implications**

4.1 The Faith Equality Scheme has informed the development of 2004/05 Operational Equalities Action Plan and will be used to inform planning and development of performance management.

4.2 In addition the proposals contained in the Faith Equality Scheme can be used to assist the Authority in mainstreaming its approach to the management of diversity with respect to faith equality across all our activities.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 Under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 the GLA has express equalities duties. Under Section 404 of the Act the Authority must ensure that it has regard to the need to the requirement “promote equality of opportunity for all persons irrespective of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion, to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.

5.2 In addition, the Authority is required to comply with the general laws in relation to equalities including Article 13 of the European Equal Treatment Framework Directive, which came into force in December 2003. This Directive makes discrimination in employment on the grounds of religion or belief unlawful and places an obligation on the Authority to implement domestic provisions to prohibit religions discrimination in the workplace.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 The Faith Equality Scheme costs include printing and design costs for the production of the document. A minimal cost, if any, for updating job monitoring application forms to incorporate a faith category.

Appendix 1 – The GLA’s Faith Equality Scheme

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